University of Alberta

The Minor Hockey Experience

by

Douglas Lee Gleddie

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 2006

Library and Archives Canada
Published Heritage Branch
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada
Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-494-13733-9
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-494-13733-9

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

Dedication

To my students.

Past, present and future.

Thank you.

Abstract

Ice hockey remains one of the most popular team sports for children and youth in Canada. Minor hockey organizations across the country involve thousands of participants. However, upon review of the literature, very few studies appear to exist in which the players themselves were asked to comment on their experience. The aim of this study was to examine the perceptions of fun in minor hockey as seen through the eyes of eight Pee Wee hockey players. Research was conducted using interpretive inquiry in an attempt to tap into the participant's experiences and emotions regarding minor hockey. The primary mode of data collection was interviews. Four themes relating to fun emerged throughout the interview and analysis process: time, competition, structure and adult involvement. Recommendations include thoughts for coaches, parents and league organizers, as well as the need for a more comprehensive study into the minor hockey experience.

Acknowledgements

I suppose it takes a village to write a thesis, in which case, the following people are definitely part of my learning community!

Thanks Andrea, for your love and support throughout this journey. You gave me space when I needed it, kicked my butt when I procrastinated, listened to my frustrations and sacrificed a lot so I could achieve this goal. Isaiah and Megan, I appreciate you giving up some (but not too many!) of our bedtime wrestling matches, among other things, so Dad could work in his "dungeon". Dad and Mom, your parenting style is largely to blame for the poems in this document, my love for the outdoors and physical activity as well as the desire to pursue dreams.

Thanks Billy, for taking a grad student as academically rusty as I was and allowing me to find my own way through this. Your sense of humour and depth of knowledge was, and is, invaluable. Julia, much of what I have learned about qualitative research I credit to you and the structure of your fine classes that allowed me to learn as much from my classmates as from you. Nancy, you are a great model of a teaching professor who cares as much for her students as she does for excellence. Finally, thanks to Ed, Nick, Colin, Allan, Darren, Jack, Ryan and Brad for sharing your collective experience in such a poignant manner. I am indebted to you for opening your hearts and minds to inquiry and allowing me to present your stories. May you find joy in all you take hold of!

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: HORIZONS.....1
Duality of Purpose
Child
Student
Teacher
Learner

CHAPTER TWO: RATIONALE AND RESEARCH.....12
Definitive Fun
Fun in Organized Sport and Physical Education
Research in Hockey
Purpose of the Study
Significance of the Study
Overview of Minor Hockey

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....25
Paradigm Choices
Interpretive Inquiry
Data Collection
Data Analysis
Ethical Considerations

CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANT PORTRAITS.....42
Tier One: Brad, Allan, Ed and Nick
Tier Two: Jack and Ryan
Tier Six: Colin and Darren

CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGING THEMES.....48
Timely Fun
Competitive Fun
Structural Fun
Funny Adults

CHAPTER SIX: GENERAL DISCUSSION.....86

CHAPTER SEVEN: INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....93
General Discussion
Parents
Coaches
League Structure and Organization
Future Directions for the Study of Minor Hockey

REFERENCES.....98

APPENDICES.....105

Chapter One: Horizons

A Duality of Purpose

Reflecting on the last ten years or so, I have noticed two constant themes in my life. Intertwined with what I do and who I am are a love for kids and a love for physical activity. Although they are certainly not the only themes in my life, together, they are woven into my tapestry in such a way that I can no longer tell where one begins and the other ends. From the time I graduated from university right through graduate school, this duality of purpose has shaped the development of my career and the daily interactions associated therein. Although location, application, career and situation have changed, these two loves have adapted to keep pace with whatever life throws my way.

Questing for a Master's degree, I have learned that one's fore-structure and subjectivities are to be embraced and elucidated – not shunned and ignored. This chapter will serve to examine where I have been, where I am going and what my relationship is with my chosen area of study. Interspersed with the four poems I have written are reflections on selected readings relating to the study of children – especially regarding my own newborn research experience.

Child

For a fleeting moment, the child is still.
Face dirty and smiling.
Jeans grass-stained, torn and mended, then torn again.
Pockets bulging with?
Before the image clearly registers, the child is gone
a blur flying among the tall grass and fences of a farm yard.
He is free to explore and exploit his surroundings.
Everything holds the potential for activity.
Bike riding, playing ball, climbing trees,
pretending cowboys, feeding animals, building, creating.
For him, work is play and play is work.
He sweats in the late afternoon heat
the dirt clings to his face, arms and legs:
neither his parents nor he seem to care.
In the course of this day,
the child has covered the breadth of the farm,
all 345 acres.
Running, jumping, crawling, sneaking,
walking, creeping, leaping, slithering
the only constant is movement.
Joy is reflected in his face.
Eyes are bright and expressive.
Face mirrors mood.
He revels in the smallest accomplishment
and shares his success excitedly with any who will listen.
At the end of the day he falls.
Into a contented sleep.
Dreaming
of
Joy
yet to come.

"Children have been written about from so many perspectives, and for a multitude of purposes. Rarely have they been asked to speak for themselves" (Davies, 1982)

This quote cuts to the heart of my research. In all of the hockey studies that I have read, not once have the young athletes themselves been asked "How do you experience hockey?" I firmly believe that the 13 year olds whom I have interviewed have a concrete grasp on what is important to them and a succinct knowledge of why they play hockey. I also believe that they have some very strong opinions about what is right and wrong in minor hockey today. Stephen Sanders (1996) agreed that children have not been asked to speak on the issues that affect them directly. Their ideas have not been taken seriously for a few different reasons. Sanders felt that due to the difficult and time-consuming nature of gathering information from children, this area has been neglected. As well, qualitative research has only recently begun to be accepted on a wide basis.

The benefits of child-based research, especially in the areas of education and physical activity, are plentiful. First of all, and perhaps most importantly, children view their world differently from adults. In order to learn how to educate children, keep them active, or meet their needs through minor hockey, we have to try to understand their point of view. Talking to an adult may also help children to discover things about themselves and others. Secondly, a new understanding regarding how children think, feel and learn can affect the way teachers (coaches, parents, leaders) design activities and outcomes. "…teachers who are attuned to children's perceptions and who can adjust instruction to be congruent with their ways of thinking take a big step toward creating learning environments in which readers thrive" (Sanders, 1996, p. 53). Finally, it is important to remember that children are individuals and each may

perceive the same event, or lesson, very differently. Reasoning of this nature is paramount to my research with Pee Wee hockey players. I hope that I have been an adequate sounding board for these players as I listened to their concerns and joys within the context of hockey. I believe that these kids enjoyed talking to an adult about their relationship with the game of hockey.

Student

Sports.
For now, team sports like volleyball and basketball.
Later it will include such diverse interests as skiing, shooting, biking and hiking.
The young man is simply infatuated with sports.
Walking through the library on a Sunday afternoon.
Baggy black shorts and a faded grey t-shirt.
Red *Chicago Bulls* hat worn backwards.
Bouncing a basketball among the study carrels
ignorant of the disturbance he is causing –
seeking only to draw others to play.
Later, on the court,
shirtless, hatless and sweaty
he runs with those he has diverted from their studies.
Together they seek solace and joy on the basketball court.
None are varsity players.
Could they have been?
Perhaps, given other circumstances and locations,
but it really doesn't matter.
For right now, today, they are consumed by the game.
Challenging each other and themselves they flow up and down the court.
The young man is in his element –
that perfect balance of skill and challenge is within reach.
He lives to dunk the ball, and has done so twice this game already.
Once on a breakaway,
once between two defenders
but each time purposefully, without "flow".
Then, it happens.
Leaping past a defender, he finds himself far above the rim.
All time seems to have stopped as he grabs the ball and dunks the rebound.
It seemed so easy.
Everyone else in slow motion.
Magically, he waited in the air where the ball would be.
Landing.
Everyone stopped. Mouths open in disbelief.
The young man does not realize the full impact of what has happened.
This state of ultimate flow will be the first of many:
a bicycle kick in a soccer game,
a puck tucked into the top shelf of a hockey net,
a cleaned section of rocky single track.
Beginnings…

"Understanding and interpretation come from a tension that lives in between what is familiar to us and what is unfamiliar. This is where interpretation resides, oscillating amid what we understand and what we don't, what is familiar to us and what is not (Mayers, 2001, p. 6)".

Although Mayers's work involved a completely different set of participants (street kids) than my own, I have drawn much inspiration from her work. She approached her work with a passion that I cannot ignore and the applications to youth based research are extremely rich. What she has done with the stories of street kids is very similar to what I have done with the voices of Pee Wee hockey players. Both groups have been studied from the outside without much attempt to get at what these teens themselves think of their situation. Mayers drew a vivid picture of the hermeneutic circle (spiral) and the way a researcher must move between fore-structure, new understandings, review of literature, new questions, old questions, projection of future understandings, interview process and new angles and thought processes. As I interviewed these young athletes, my own fore-structure was in constant interplay with the literature I had reviewed, the questions I asked and the angles I pursued.

Aside from the parallels with my own research, Mayers engaged in a valuable discussion of the three central tenets of hermeneutics. The first is the idea of questioning and openness. "…a program of research by question as opposed to only by method (Mayers, 2001, p. 8)". This is the heart of hermeneutics: constant, passionate questioning to come to a greater understanding of an experience. Researchers follow any trails they might find in the course of questioning. Some will lead to new revelations, some will be cast aside and others will simply lead to more questions; all are valuable. I feel that I have stayed true to this ideal. Many times in

my interviewing, I have wondered, "Why am I even listening to this? This comment is irrelevant." While it is true that some tangents have been long discarded, others, such as the enigma of full contact, or hitting, only emerged as a direct result of following such a seemingly divergent path. If I hadn't been open to whatever the teens brought up, I would have closed the door on many valuable discussions.

The second tenet is that of language and understanding. "I am continually engaged in a dialogic conversation with myself, with others, with participants, with society and with the world. To that end, the entire interpretive turn is about conversation and renovation (Mayers, 2001, p. 9)." Communication is key to research. There are so many stakeholders, all of whom must interact through language of one sort or another. Mayers talked of newness bringing a temporal understanding, which then leads to new avenues of questioning - the oscillation between what we know and don't know. This idea is consistent with the post-constructivist idea that understanding and learning are never finite or complete.

The final tenet according to Mayers (2001) was that of the hermeneutic circle. "I am constantly cycling in questioning and understanding – reflection that repeats back upon itself, always taking into account the diverse teaching the kids offered, always turning towards what emerges as unfamiliar (p. 12)." Of all the teachings of hermeneutics, this one must be the keystone. To reach for the unfamiliar and seek out what has gone unnoticed is paramount to qualitative research. I have taken my personal historical experience of hockey, balanced it with the literature I have read and interacted with the participant's thought process all at the same time. All of this process leads to a huge mess, yet within that tangle new insights and questions beckon

seductively. A seemingly simple question such as, "How do you experience hockey?" has become an incredibly complex research process resulting in the emergence of a few kernels of truth regarding minor hockey as seen through the eyes of eight pee wee players.

Teacher

He has played and worked with kids all over the world.
He has always enjoyed kids, related well with them –
sometimes better than with adults.
They seem to understand each other.
Strange kids on the playground, giving trust, receiving underducks.
Scary, cool.
As a result, he graduated from university again –
this time with a teaching certificate for physical education.
Junior high.
Looks of pity and pain every time the assignment is mentioned.
They don't understand. He has a connection with these kids.
In fact, he sometimes can't believe he is getting paid to do this.
Beautiful winter days cross country skiing with teenagers in the river valley.
Basketball and badminton in the gym, soccer and football on the field. Mountain biking through the fall leaves.
Why would anyone not want to do this?
Is it because he can't, or won't, grow up himself?
No.
He is grown up – he has a mortgage, a wife, children of his own.
The teens know that he is grown up:
a parent, a teacher - yet they still find a connection.
Is it because he still likes to play?
Maybe.
Possibly.
Probably.
He still plays hockey at every opportunity.
Revels in each small improvement.
Spending a day learning to snowboard
Half a school watching from the chairlift.
Every slip, every fall, every face plant.
Every smile.
He finds inherent joy in physical activity of any kind –
he hopes it is contagious.
That is why he is here,
at this school,
with these kids.
Be contagious.
Allow freedom to make mistakes
and opportunity to learn from them.
Provide an environment that is safe and inviting.
Provide opportunities.
Learn.
Grow.
Be active.
Joy.

> *After that November night, after the word "JOY" practically hovered at the back of the stage in hundred-watt bulbs, my own work came alive. I looked all over the campus for joy, all over town for joy and once in a while I found it. What surprised me is that in the places where I saw it, I also saw learning, patience, attention, lots of effort, beautiful and exciting environments, high achievement – all of the things we try and get at from the wrong directions. ... With joy, the outside standards are meaningless; when we do what we love to do, we keep after it, we always want to know more and do more and keep going. There is no such thing as good enough. (Childress, 2000, p. 257)*

To say that I was moved by Childress's work would be an understatement. I made an immediate connection with the author and participants due to my own career choice as a junior high physical education teacher. Although I teach slightly younger kids, I could see many aspects of my own students in his work. As a teacher, I struggle with the whole system of education and the cookie cutter concept that seems to preclude joy. I try to provide opportunities for joy to emerge or develop in my classroom or gymnasium. I know that many times I have failed. I take heart, however, in the times where I know I have succeeded. This article connects directly to the passions I mentioned earlier: teens and the joy of physical activity.

In Childress's (2000) work I was reminded again of the need to continually look for the new, the old, the obscure and the seemingly irrelevant in my own research. I hope that I have been able to communicate and begin to understand the experience of minor hockey through the words of these 13 year olds. Above all, I hope I got it right! Childress's three months of not being able to see the forest for the trees served as a shining example for me. I have had to keep coming back to the transcripts, consistently questioning myself, the participants and the data. Somewhere inside all the little details, examples, and stories, joy is waiting.

Learner

Why go back to school?
He already has two degrees.
Teach full time AND go to school full time?
He must be crazy.
Maybe.
Maybe not.
Perhaps he is ready.
Ready to combine theory and practice.
Ready to learn.
He sits some nights, marking, typing transcripts, writing papers and wonders. What is the point?
Is it worth it?
To learn – that is the point.
Yes – it is worth it.
The combination of two loves.
Teens and physical activity.
Intertwined as one.
Life and career.
A calling.
A gift.
Hockey now.
What next?
Teens.
Physical Activity.
Joy.

Chapter Two: Rationale and Research

As stated earlier, my primary motivation for this study derived from my daily involvement with physical activity and adolescents as a junior high physical education (PE) teacher. Whenever I asked my students why they enjoyed a particular sport they invariably said, "Because it's fun!" Conversely, when I asked other students why they did not like that same sport they said, "Because it's no fun!" How is it that in a single activity, some students can experience fun while others do not? Aren't all kids the same? Isn't fun for me also fun for you? Perhaps the answer is, "No". Perhaps there are common elements to fun for everyone. The fact remains, for some children, organized sport (OS) can be a wonderful place where magical things happen to encourage involvement and success. For others, childhood sport can be a painful experience that could eventually have a negative effect on their adult activity levels. Most teachers, coaches and researchers recognize the importance of fun as a key motivator for children in organized sport (Daley, 2002; Mandigo & Couture, 1996; O'Reilly, Tompkins & Gallant, 2001; Strean & Holt, 2000; Wankel & Sefton, 1989).

Some coaches and programs seem to experience a lot of success; their athletes have a great deal of fun, learn an immense amount and are successful. Others rely on lifeless, repetitive drills or meaningless scrimmage and in the process, turn youth off sport entirely. There is a growing body of research dedicated to discovering the relationships at work in OS regarding fun, play, skill development and success (Chalip & Csikszentmihalyi, 1984; Mandigo & Couture, 1996; Strean & Holt, 2000; Wankel & Sefton, 1989). The question remains, however, "How do the children themselves experience fun in OS?"

Defining Fun

Let us begin by looking at the various definitions of fun. The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* defined the word as, "amusement, especially lively or playful" (p. 564). To go a little deeper, fun and games are defined as, "light-hearted or amusing activities" (Barber, 1998, p. 564). If that is all fun means, then maybe we are trivializing sport when we try to make it fun. Griffin, Chandler and Sariscsany (1993), however, have argued that with an organizing structure emphasizing realistic challenges, skill development and success in terms of mastery, fun in PE can be purposeful. Other researchers, such as Hastie (1998) and Portman (1995), have concurred with this idea and further equated a lack of fun with a lack of success. Whitehead (1988) and Bean and Kinnear (1989) reiterated that fun in physical education should not be seen as merely recreation, but as a deeper pleasure with one's own capable physical movement that is a pleasurable experience in itself. Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's extensive research into the Flow model also applies here with the intrinsic sense of well being and physical control that an athlete feels when the levels of challenge and skill are close or equal (1975, 1988, 1990). Walter Podilchak (1991) has broken the definition down even further and differentiated between fun and enjoyment. He argued that only enjoyment is truly intrinsic due to its reflective and personal nature. Fun, by contrast, is extrinsic due to its inherent social orientation. Podilchak even went so far as to say that because fun is shaped by social egalitarianism then you can't have fun by yourself. However, I don't subscribe to this narrow view.

Another angle has been presented by James Mandigo and Roger Couture (1996).

> ...children find physical activities fun when personal objectives and intrinsic factors such as skill development, improvement, optimal challenge, control over the environment, intrinsic motivation, opportunity to participate and constructive feedback are emphasized over such extrinsic factors such as winning (p. 58).

I believe this point of view offers a balanced platform from which to look at the role of fun in OS, particularly in minor hockey.

Fun in Organized Sport and Physical Education

If fun is used as an outcome, is skill development sacrificed? Conversely, if one chooses skill development, does fun need to be put on the chopping block? A number of studies have examined this difficult dichotomy. O'Reilly, Tompkins and Gallant (2001) surveyed a number of female educators from two rural school boards in Nova Scotia about their experiences teaching physical education. From the 14 returned surveys, they chose 7 teachers for in depth, open-ended interviews with the researchers. O'Reilly, Tompkins and Gallant examined two basic themes that emerged from their questioning: "Fun is not competition – or maybe it is" and "Fun (and) Games for life".

Theme One: Fun is not competition... or maybe it is. Each teacher, by choosing competitive type games, had to decide how to deal with conflicts that occurred due to some students losing. Usually, scores were downplayed and fun was inserted as the primary goal of competition. "The teachers' refusal to keep score,

combined with their tendency to ignore other, less emphasized elements of the competitive experience such as team cooperation to reach a goal, the implementation of planned strategies and tactics, and striving for personal improvement, resulted in classes where the experience of fun appeared to be the primary goal" (p. 217). Due to extrinsic factors such as poor facilities, limited time and equipment, games tended to be modified to a lowest common denominator in terms of skill.

Theme Two: Fun (and) Games for Life, examines the need to create a lifelong love for physical activity and a realization of the benefits of such a life. Carol, one of the participants, stated that the goal should be, "...to have an appreciation for physical activity, and want to continue doing it whether they're good at it or not good at it." Phillipa, another participant, commented, "So, for me, if they participate, and they have a positive attitude, that's all I'm looking for ..." (p. 217-18). For most of the teachers in the study, skill development was sacrificed in favour of enjoyment. Lack of success equals lack of fun so all games were modified to the point where only a minimal skill level was needed and most students had maximum opportunity for success and participation.

O'Reilly, Tomkins and Gallant's study brings to light some important considerations. Most importantly, when fun is seen as the sole, or most appropriate outcome for students (athletes), the positive aspects of competition may be ignored or neglected. This approach negates the opportunity for students to experience the intrinsic joy that results from an appropriate balance between skill and challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Rather than trying to challenge each student at their own skill level, the teachers in question chose to lower the bar to its lowest position.

> The perverse result of the teachers' attempts to curtail the more negative aspects of competition in their classes was that possibilities for meaningful participation, and the development of intrinsic enjoyment in physical activity were, for many students, reduced (O'Reilly, Tompkins & Gallant, 2001, p. 219).

In conclusion, O'Reilly, Tompkins and Gallant (2001) conceded that physical educators face many obstacles in their quest to create a love for activity. While fun may be a valuable motivator, at times, it exists largely as an extrinsic motivator and fails to reach the intrinsic depths of satisfaction found through overcoming an appropriate challenge with applied skill.

The parallels with OS are fairly easy to make. It can be very difficult to find appropriate challenges for a team of 25 - 30 widely skilled hockey players. When reflecting upon a practice or game, the tendency can be to ask, "Did they have fun?" Maybe we need to be asking, "Did every athlete have the opportunity to experience an intrinsic joy stemming from the appropriate balance of skill and challenge?"

Another study that dealt specifically with fun, was done by Strean and Holt (2000). Their purpose was to study coaches', parents' and athletes' perceptions of fun in youth sports. They used concept maps prepared by 11 coaches, 19 parents and 117 children, as well as in depth personal interviews with 3 coaches, 5 parents and 9 children. Two key themes emerged from the data. First, games are seen as more fun than drills. When asked, "What about some of your practices or parts of practices that make it more fun?" one athlete responded, "Scrimmaging is the best" (p. 89). Parents made the following comments: "Brian loves the scrimmage; he loves the game."

"Sam doesn't really like the drill in practices." "The scrimmages are the best parts for the kids. That is what they want to do; they would do all this other stuff, but they want to scrimmage" (p. 90).

The second theme considered the scrimmage, or game, as a reward. An assumption is that if we want kids to do drills and skills, then we need to reward them with a game at the end. One of the coaches summed it up:

> You have to set aside, I think, some period in there where they can have fun doing what they've learned....This is where we always try to set aside, I don't know, fifteen, twenty minutes, a half an hour maybe, *at the end of the practice* – a fun type thing, where they can actually...play games because their idea of fun is going out and playing the game itself...And then thereby giving them a practice game at the end. It's their reward, I think (p. 91).

The perception put forth by players, coaches and parents is that no actual learning takes place in the game. It exists solely for the purpose of applying skills previously learned. Strean and Holt opposed this idea and subscribe to the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model, which is a way of teaching, coaching and learning that uses realistic game circumstances, decision making skills and tactical awareness to build skills within a games framework. "We hypothesize that if individuals are taught in a way that emphasizes the cognitive, tactical decision making elements of game play as the important skills (a TGfU approach), then they will have the game skills to meet the challenges of the game, rather than simply the individual skills to meet the challenges of discrete phases of the game" (p. 94).

Wankel and Sefton (1989) engaged in a study with ringette and hockey players as participants. Fifty-five girls and 67 boys were given pre-game and post-game questionnaires at 12 games during their schedule. The responses were analyzed to identify the best predictors of reported "fun level" experienced in each of the games. Variables included, among others: pre- and post-game measures of anxiety and affect, measures of choice, levels of challenge and how well one played.

The results of this study provided some statistical basis for the relevance of fun for children. The most consistent predictor of individuals' perceptions of fun was the post-game rating of positive affect. "Clearly fun is a positive affective state associated with such feelings as happy, cheerful and friendly as opposed to sad, irritable and angry" (Wankel & Sefton, 1989, p. 362). Fun in this context was also associated with intrinsic motivation. The second best predictor was the post-game survey of how well the athlete thought she or he had played. This observation serves as an indication that "...enjoyment in youth sport is very achievement-orientated" (p. 363). Please note that achievement here is meant to mean how well the individual athlete performed (intrinsic), not whether the team won or lost (extrinsic). Team outcome was seen as much less important than perception of personal performance. The final predictor of fun was an appropriate level of challenge (p. 363). Again, these findings are consistent with the other qualitative measures discussed earlier.

Mandigo and Couture (1996) focussed on the components of fun during PE classes and OS according to children and adolescents aged 9 to 14. Through the use of a questionnaire, they had respondents rate the quality of their experiences in both areas. One of the key components to emerge from the study was that fun in PE and

OS was "primarily influenced by intrinsic factors such as skill, boredom, locus of control, quality of feedback and intrinsic motivation" (p. 68). Additionally, to maximize fun, the respondents indicated a desire for a variety of activities in one program as well as appropriate equipment. Mandigo and Couture affirmed the conclusions of Chalip, Czikszenmihalyi, Kleiber and Larsen (1984) and Czikszenmihalyi (1975) and agreed that the more choice and control given to children, the more chance for flow. They did note, however, that it is difficult to tell whether fun produces flow or vice versa.

In conclusion, despite the difficulty in specifying exactly what fun is, most coaches, athletes and researchers realize the importance of fun in developing successful, physically active kids. Three basic themes emerge: First of all, fun is most effective as an intrinsic motivator – the inherent joy of physical activity. Second, although fun is an important motivational tool, it cannot stand alone as the only outcome for quality OS or PE programs. Finally, any program that seeks intrinsic fun must offer appropriate challenges met with appropriate skill development. What remains is to develop techniques and strategies to best utilize the benefits of the intrinsic fun in OS.

Research Specific to Ice Hockey

Much of the research focussed on ice hockey seems to focus on aggression, violence, or gender differences (Colburn, 1985; Dunn & Causgrove Dunn, 1999; Faulkner, 1974; Stephens, 2003; Theberge, 1995). As well, the majority of research focuses on elite or professional athletes (Dunn & Causgrove Dunn, 1999; Gallmeier, 1988; McPherson, 1976; Schick & Meeuwisse, 2000; Theberge, 1995; Vaz, 1982). A

prominent exception was Wankel and Sefton's 1989 article, *Factors distinguishing high and low-fun experiences in ice hockey*. This study was a spin off of their research with youth hockey and ringette players. In this study they examined differences between "high fun" and "low fun" groups of participants from ice hockey teams. They concluded that winning was not as important to a player's fun level as personal success and facing realistic challenges in games with something at stake. As well, they indicated the importance of treating players as individuals and noted that some players from each group were members of the same team. Another study that focused on youth ice hockey was Ingram & Dewar's, *Through the eyes of youth: "deep play" in Pee Wee ice hockey* (1999). The process involved interviewing boys on their opinions and attitudes regarding playing sports and becoming a man. Although interesting, the study was more concerned with how hockey contributes to the boy's interpretation of masculinity and femininity applied to society. The actual game and experience of hockey was relegated to the background.

Given the immense popularity of ice hockey, I believe there is a significant gap in what we know about the experiences of youth in that particular sport. If we listen to what youth have to say about their extensive personal hockey experience, this gap can begin to be filled. Hopefully this study is the first of many to do just that.

Purpose of the Study

This thesis for the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research examines the perceptions of fun in minor hockey as seen through the eyes of the players themselves. I have used a qualitative method to get to the heart of how children

experience fun in ice hockey. As quoted in Merriam's *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (1998), Patton (1985) stated:

> [Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting... (p. 1)

This thesis deals specifically with player perceptions of fun in organized hockey. What does fun mean for these players? How does it affect their experience? The study has been conducted as an interpretive inquiry to attempt to get into the participant's experiences and emotions regarding this issue. The primary mode of data collection was interviews.

Significance of the Study

Our society is beset by obesity and lack of regular physical activity. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI, 2004), over the past two decades, numbers of overweight and obese children have nearly tripled in Canada. In 1998, Canadians 15 years and older spent an average of 15 hours a week watching television compared to only 7 hours per week in active leisure pursuits. Time spent playing video games by Canadian children is among the highest in the world (CIHI, 2004). In 2000, 57% of Canadian children and youth aged 5-17 years were not sufficiently active to meet international guidelines for optimal growth and development. For

adolescents, this number grew from 64% in 2000 to 82% in 2002 (Craig & Cameron, 2004; Craig et. al., 2001)

One of the ways to address this inactivity may be through involvement in organized sports. Qualified adults supervising and coaching play in a variety of sports allow our children the option of activity. In Canada, millions of parents enrol their children in minor hockey as the sport of choice. I believe that by studying this popular "arena" from the perspective of the players themselves we can gain valuable insights into what motivates kids to play hockey as a lifetime sport and stay active. If we know more about the experience of fun in minor hockey we may be able to apply similar approaches in other OS.

According to Hockey Canada's website, 4.5 million Canadians are involved in the sport as coaches, players, officials, administrators or direct volunteers. Statistics Canada (2000) measures hockey second (6.2%) only to golf (7.4%) in popularity among those 15 years of age or older. These percentages translate into roughly 1,499,000 active hockey players. When we switch to looking at involvement by gender, this number climbs significantly for males. A whopping 12% (1,435,000) of males over 15 play hockey of some sort, making it the most popular sport among males. We are a hockey nation; one only has to look at the TV ratings for the Olympic men's gold medal match between Canada and the USA to verify that fact – the highest rating in Canadian broadcast history (Global, 2002).

Minor hockey (ages: 4 – 21 years) involvement is possibly even greater. Over 508,000 players were registered with Hockey Canada for the 1998-99 season. In that

same season there were more than 1.5 million games played and 2 million practices. Clearly, minor hockey is a significant factor in youth sport, worthy of research.

This research sought out the perspectives of players at the Pee Wee level (over 11 and under 13 years old – see Appendix H). I wanted to know how kids at this age experience fun playing competitive hockey. My goal was to listen to the stories that these participants generated – what is "the hockey experience" from their unique perspective. I did not necessarily seek answers but rather, hoped to gain from the experience of listening to those youth who are deeply involved and connected with this popular activity.

We know that fun is a major motivator for kids and it can lead to a deeper intrinsic enjoyment of physical activity (Chalip & Csikszentmihalyi, 1984). Does fun still motivate these kids to be involved in minor hockey? If so, through which specific experiences are they finding fun? Above all, I believe this study provides valuable insight into what fun truly means to these hockey players. General areas of impact may include: league structure and organization, rule modifications (intentional body contact, ice time, penalties etc.), parental / spectator guidelines, and coaching methodology.

Overview of Minor Hockey Organization

The players in this study were all from the same organization that operates teams in a variety of tiers for a minor hockey association in a western Canadian city. This organization has teams from Initiation (first time players or under 10 years old) through to Junior C (18-21 years old). They are a regional association, which means that they can only take players from neighbourhoods within their own area. Every

year, players are able to try out for various tiers at their appropriate age level (Appendix H). Players have to pay a separate fee to try out for Tier 1 (the highest level of Pee Wee). This system allows the top players to come together for the coaches to assess them and determine the best make-up for the Tier 1 team that particular year. If a player does not make Tier 1, or simply wishes to try out for a lower tier, they can attend the regular try-outs at a later date. At these try-outs, the rest of the coaches from Tier 2 down, come together to assess which Tier each player belongs in for that particular year. Players are run through basic drills and scrimmages as the coaches decide where each player fits into the organization. Each team's make-up changes from year to year as various players improve or the needs of each Tier change. It is rare for a group of players to stay together on the same team for more than a few seasons.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Paradigm Choices

Guba and Lincoln's chapter on competing paradigms in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), shed much needed light on the options available to the modern qualitative researcher. A paradigm is defined as, "the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (p. 105). It is crucial that researchers identify which paradigm to use, as it has a huge effect on the formation, methodology and analysis of their work. Guba and Lincoln identified four basic choices: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism. When considering which paradigm to immerse one's research in, three questions come to the fore.

1. *The ontological question.* What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?
2. *The epistemological question.* What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?
3. *The methodological question.* How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?

The way researchers answer these questions determines their basic paradigm framework. The ontological question is perhaps the most telling as it controls the answers to the other two questions. Positivism assumes a natural world order where reality is "real" and able to be known. Post-positivism, also seeks a "real" reality but one that cannot be perfectly grasped. Critical theory applies a historical realism, a

virtual reality shaped by certain values found in society, gender and culture among others. Finally, constructivism seeks out local and specifically constructed realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

In my proposed research, I feel closest to the constructivist paradigm due to its emphasis on relativism and the creation of constructs to generate meaning. Epistemologically, then, there exists a created knowledge stemming from the interaction between the researcher and participant. Methodologically, constructivism draws from the hermeneutic school of thought in which individual constructions are again drawn from the relationship developed between and among the etic (outsider) and emic (insider) (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Through my own research, I hope to create a construct based on blurring the lines between insider and outsider, seeking to uncover and interpret the experience of the insider through hermeneutic discourse. I can only truly understand adolescent perceptions of fun in OS if I allow myself to connect with them and listen to their stories. Ontologically, the reality of fun is dependent on unique social and experientially based constructions. By allowing and enabling these constructions to come to the surface, a researcher can open up to true change and comprehension. This type of grounded knowledge stems from a qualified researcher developing a relationship with the research participants in such a way that, "...a person's interpretations will rarely be bizarre or arbitrary, but rather will probably reflect a historical moment" (Ellis, 1998, p. 8). It is this historical moment, a snapshot of life in the culture of minor hockey, that the researcher and others can reflect and build upon to encourage change.

Merriam (1998) divided qualitative research into three basic forms of educational application. *Positivist* research, typifies education as the object to be studied. Reality is measurable and observable and knowledge gained can be objective and quantifiable. *Interpretive* research considers education as a process and a lived experience. Knowledge gained is inductive rather than deductive in nature. This typology also involves multiple realities, which are constructed by individuals in a social environment. Finally, *critical research* views education as a social institution created for a certain cultural or social mandate. Knowledge is in the form of "an ideological critique of power, privilege, and oppression in areas of educational practice" (p. 4). My research will fall clearly into the interpretive realm as I seek to listen to the reality created by particular athletes on hockey teams. I am not searching for "the truth" or answers to previously explored questions. Rather, I seek to generate new questions and theories regarding the experience of fun in minor hockey.

Interpretive Inquiry

The positivist paradigm addresses prejudice or bias as a negative component that needs to be weeded out for research to be valid. The idea is to be as objective as possible in order for the results to be untainted by bias. Unfortunately, this process often removes contextual relativity with the end result being sterile facts and figures. Hermeneutic methodology, however, involves addressing and indeed actively engaging one's subjectivities or fore-structure. Instead of isolating and trying to eliminate a researcher's biases or prejudices towards a question, hermeneutical thought asks us to embrace our subjectivities and make them work to our advantage.

"What one can see at any given time is limited by one's vantage point, or what in hermeneutics is called one's horizon" (Ellis, 1998, p. 8).

My own horizon has constantly evolved and is very different from what it was over ten years ago. I have progressed on my life journey of experiences and constructs both within and without of the teaching profession. My study and practice of pedagogy progressed from predominantly theoretical (early teachers education), to a mixture of theory and tentative practice (student teaching), to a seesaw game between what I experience practically as an active physical education teacher and what I learn theoretically as a graduate student. My hope is that my position as a practicing teacher, interacting daily with physically active teens, will allow me to better engage my own horizon with that of the participants. Even the fact that I also play hockey will allow us all to construct meaning from the stories we share.

This potential for engagement brings us to the concept of the hermeneutic circle. The idea conceptualizes the research process as a circle consisting of forward and backward arcs. As the researcher begins the initial phase of analysis there is a projection made on the basis of personal subjectivities and fore-structure, "…the current product of one's autobiography (beliefs, values, interests, interpretive frameworks) and one's relationship to the question or problem (pre-understanding and concerned engagement)." (Ellis, 1998, p. 27) In the backward arc, the researcher seeks to evaluate the initial projection. It is here that s/he purposefully seeks for what may be missing, that which may not have been obvious, data confirmation and inconsistencies. Using this method, the researcher admits a consciousness of

subjectivities yet is able to use those very subjectivities to dig deeper and uncover relative material.

Tied in with the hermeneutic circle is the use of a spiral to track the process of an interpretive inquiry. The first loop involves the researcher's initial entry question and the resulting encounter with the participant(s). Ellis (1998) reminded us that one must be open to whatever direction this first loop may take. It could be "apparently global or unfocused" (p. 21). The actual format this first loop may take is limited only by the creativity of the researcher. Examples include videotape, picture creation and holistic interviews. Key to the first loop is the development of an appropriate entry question.

> One must start with openness, humility and genuine engagement. ... The question posed has to be a real one rather than an abstract debate or position on an issue one wishes to promote. One must begin by acknowledging that one does not know the answer or that one does not know what to do to be helpful in a situation one cares about. Useful entry questions tend to be simple and open. They are not rhetorical; they do not imply an answer. (Ellis, 1998, p. 18)

The obvious result of this first loop is the generation of findings. Some of these may be expected results, others may turn out to be a huge surprise – providing researchers allow themselves to be surprised! The hermeneutical term for these surprises is "uncoverings." "While uncoverings may not lead directly to a solution, they often enable a researcher to understand the problem or question differently and so to reframe it usefully for planning the next step in the inquiry" (Ellis, 1998, p. 22). In

this vein, the researcher then continues into the second loop: either returning to the participant for another interview or perhaps going over old data with a new frame of reference developed out of the uncoverings of the backward arc. At the end of the formal research process, each loop becomes part of the whole to be written into a single text.

Data Collection

The research project involved three Pee Wee hockey teams using two to four players from each team. Participant selection took place from groups of students that I have taught or coached. Approximately 15 students at the school were involved in Pee Wee hockey at the time of the study. Although all were approached to participate, in the interests of time I was only seeking nine participants. As it turned out, only nine participants and their parents consented, however, one dropped out prior to the interview process. This study included only male hockey players since our school did not have any female players at the Pee Wee level.

I secured each participant's permission as well as their parent's permission. All players were from local minor league hockey teams in a major urban centre. The three teams all played in the same minor hockey association under the same regional body. Each team had the same comparable age level (Pee Wee), although each played in a different tier.

I gathered all of my data through personal and small group interviews. The process of interviewing is not an exact science, however, there are some clear guidelines intended to increase the possibility of success. At its worst, an interview can be a cold, impersonal structure not unlike a prison visit using a phone line across a

wall of Plexiglas. At its best, an interview is like a conversation over a cup of coffee with a trusted friend. This concept in itself can lead to possible ethical dilemmas and even abuse. Sandra Weber (1986) discussed these issues as part of a critical reflection based on her own experience of interviewing. An interview begins with an invitation to join a discussion based on a certain topic. If the invitation is genuine, "the interview becomes a joint reflection on a phenomenon, a deepening of experience for both interviewer and participant" (p. 65-66). Unfortunately, this experience can also lead to abuse if the interviewer changes from "I want to know you-as-you" to "who cares about you or notices you-as-you as long as I find out about *it*" (p. 66).

Weber also wrote a great deal about the trust relationship inherent to interviewing. There is risk involved for both parties. A participant trusts that the researcher will genuinely listen to what they have to say and not misrepresent or twist their words at a later time. A researcher trusts that what the participant says is genuine and not just what the participant thinks the researcher wants to hear (p. 66-67). Seidman (1991) referred to an "inner voice" as opposed to outer voice. The former is what the participant truly thinks and feels. The latter is a voice that, "always reflects an awareness of the audience. It is not untrue; it is guarded. It is a voice that participants would use if they were talking to an audience of 300 in an auditorium" (p. 56). Seidman pointed out a particular language of the "outer voice" of which an interviewer needs to be aware. Words like, "challenge", "adventure", and "fascinate". Seidman also cautioned against making participants feel defensive about their language. He encourages the researcher to take the participant's language seriously, yet try to encourage a deeper level of conversation.

Seidman identified the most important aspect of interviewing as listening. One good way to ascertain if the researcher is listening is to compare the length of the participant's responses with the length of the comments and questions of the interviewer. The interviewer's role is to elicit responses and nudge the participant along, not to carry the conversation. Weber also recognized the importance of listening and described a good interview as follows:

> The interview has its best moments when the interviewer and the participant are both caught up in the phenomenon being discussed, when both are trying and wanting to understand. At these times, both people forget the tape-recorder, forget that "this is an interview," and simply talk and listen in a genuine dialogue that is focussed on the phenomenon in question. They are talking to each other rather than past each other. The interviews, then, are very much a shared experience affecting both.
>
> (1986, p. 69)

Another important aspect of the interview process refers to the hermeneutic circle, or spiral. It is the researcher's opportunity to go back and clarify comments, ask new questions or revisit old ones. It also gives the participant the feeling of having a say in the way the interview is going and a sense of being consulted for clarification.

Other than the initial opening questions, most of my interview questions were determined by the participants in the study. I conceptualized and monitored the progression of questioning, however, quite often I was able to "go with the flow" to see what kind of journey the participants took me on. Initial questioning moved from

the general to the specific, focusing on each participant's perception of fun and enjoyment through organized hockey (Appendices E&G).

Each participant chose from a short list of pre-interview activities (Appendix E). The purpose of this activity was to allow the participant time to reflect on the general area of interest and to get them thinking topically prior to the first interview. It also allowed the participant a degree of control by determining what the topic of the first interview would be. For me, this technique worked two ways: like a springboard with which to dive into the initial interview and like a touchstone, something to refer back to from time to time to stimulate conversation. I stressed to the participants that artistic talent was not a factor for these activities. I was simply looking for representations of how they experienced a variety of events. Although not all participants completed a pre-interview activity, I collected and reviewed all that were completed previous to the first scheduled interview.

I arranged with my principal to use a small conference room at my school. This arrangement assured a neutral setting which was quiet and non-threatening. I phoned each of the participants' parents to arrange a preliminary meeting to discuss the study and attain participant and parental permission. I met personally with all the parents except one who chose to have their child bring an information package home for their perusal.

My first interview was a great learning experience for me. Although I had conducted informal interviews with students prior to this study, I had arrived at my first formal interview as a researcher. It also happened to be with the most soft-spoken and shy participant. He was very nervous, as was I. As we got settled into the

conversation it got much better, however, I took a drastic step to ensure the rest of the interviews did not start out that way. I bought cookies. And juice. And more cookies – I bought a lot of cookies! It was amazing how much more relaxed the participants were when they could munch a cookie as they talked. Although it made for some difficult transcribing, I believe the positives outweighed the negatives!

I set the initial interview length at a maximum of 45 minutes for each player. None of the first round of interviews reached this maximum. Before engaging in a second interview, I transcribed the first one, read over the transcripts several times as well as made notes indicating further questioning and the pursuit of some interesting leads. The second interview provided me with the opportunity to close in on topics, conversations and comments about hockey that the participant was passionate about and willing to discuss. I found this process to be very rewarding, with the second interview being much more relaxed and informative.

I chose to interview each team together for the third interview. I had two teams of two players and one of four. I found this method to be an excellent capping exercise. At times, the players forgot I was there and carried the whole conversation on their own and took it to places I never could. For a number of reasons, the group session with the two players went better than the one with four players. In hindsight, I would have split the larger team of four into two groups of two. The banter and great conversations could then happen without as much potential for silliness (imagine large quantities of juice being expelled through a teen's nostrils…). Perhaps staging the group interviews prior to school rather than at lunchtime would have provided a more

serene environment for conversation. I offered to provide copies of the transcripts to the participants but they were not interested.

In line with the methodology and paradigms I have chosen, I was personally involved with the findings. Data is filtered through the researcher as interpreter. Merriam (1998) stated, "*the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.* Data are mediated through this human instrument, the researcher, rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer" (p. 7). The researcher must remain open and responsive to the material being studied. In fact, given the nature of the hermeneutic circle, this aspect is key to the development of this type of research. Only the primary researcher in the field can be sensitive to nuances and missing pieces as they loop through the spiral of analysis. "...inductive researchers hope to find a theory that explains their data" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7) This situation also means that researchers must remain very aware of personal subjectivities in order to deal with them properly in the backward arc. Personally, my profession as a physical education teacher, as well as my perpetual involvement in organized sport, especially hockey, had the potential to help or hinder the process. The fact that I play hockey and am familiar with the sport increased my rapport with the participants and gave me an "in". I do, however, need to be sure that I allow the participant's stories to come through untouched by my own experience with, and view of, fun.

I admit I was worried about my dual role as researcher and teacher. Every participant in the study also had me as their current PE teacher. That fact had the potential to interfere with open discussion during the interviews. I made a concerted

effort to communicate the idea that this research was completely separate from our "school roles". I believe I was successful due to the fact that during the second interview, several of the participants swore, something they would never do in any of my PE classes!

Sanders provided a list of strategies for interviewing children, prefaced by the idea that each interview is a unique event and must be tailored to the situation and the participant. I have summarized a few of these strategies and added my own italicized interview experiences and ruminations.

1. Establishment of a personal relationship and trust.

   I had an advantage of already having a relationship with each of these kids. At some point that year I had taught or coached all of them. As stated previously, the rapport that I had with these kids has had to be redefined in the concept of "researcher" and "participant".

2. Talk with more than one student at a time.

   I rode the fence here and used both individual and group interviews to try and get the best of both worlds. What I hoped for was the disclosure of the personal interview – due to the trust level I have already developed with these kids – combined with the comfort level and inspiration of a group interview.

3. Use terms and vocabulary that the students understand.

   This area has been a distinct advantage for me. I pride myself on being in tune with "kid-culture" and I have found that this knowledge of "in" vocabulary helps me to get a little deeper and build rapport with the participants.

4. Play dumb.

   I did not use this approach with my own participants. I think that with junior high kids you have to be careful. If they think you are stringing them along that will be the end of the interview. I preferred to ask them to explain a concept or term fully. I also tried to explain the rationale behind my questions. Teens like to be treated with respect (don't we all?) and I don't think it's fair to play games.

Data Analysis

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated, "Qualitative research is endlessly creative and interpretive. The researcher does not just leave the field with mountains of empirical materials and then easily write up his or her findings. Qualitative interpretations are constructed" (p.14-15). The analysis portion is very complex and usually involves many revisions and returns to the data at hand. An acceptable technique of data analysis is the constant comparative method. One piece of data is compared with another to examine similarities and differences. Data are then grouped according to dimension, given a tentative name and treated as a theme. The researcher seeks for patterns, and then builds a theory or theories grounded in the organization of the data (Merriam, 1998).

Interpretation of data may result in any number of conclusions. One of the most prevalent and far reaching is discovering problems within a particular structure or experience. "Problem finding is a type of insight that may result from interpretation" (Peshkin, 1993, p. 26). This type of discovery can pinpoint areas for later research as well as initiate discussions and possible solutions.

Packer and Addison (1989) evaluated four separate evaluative techniques and found them all failing in some way, shape, or form. The difficulty seems to be in the search for some sort of external or conclusive validity. The following analogy is very enlightening.

> The traditional approach to validation involves a misunderstanding that is like thinking the question, "How good is the hammer?" is similar to "How heavy is the hammer?" Two things are overlooked: the task in which the hammer will

> be employed, and its place among the other tools. The hammer's weight can be established with no attention to either of these. But the hammer is good only if it advances the current task and only if it works well with its companion tools. The choice is not a fixed one. It will change as new phases of the task arrive. (p. 291)

This concept will be important for my own interpretation. Does my study have real applications for minor hockey? Does it extend current research and understanding? Does it CHANGE something? Anything?

Packer and Addison also disputed the notion of qualitative interpretation as conjecture. The importance of the projection portion of the hermeneutic circle is sometimes forgotten in the search for external validity.

> To see interpretation as conjecture is to misunderstand interpretive inquiry, just as to think that the natural sciences proceed by guess-and-validation is to have a mistaken view of science. Ricoeur and Hirsch missed the significance of projection. Interpretation is the working out of possibilities that have become apparent in a preliminary, dim understanding of events. (Packer & Addison, 1989, p. 277)

I found this process to be key as I worked through the stages of data analysis. Each time I went back to the transcripts I was forced to re-evaluate my thinking and what I was reading. This process was a key part of what went on between interviews. Transcribe, read, highlight, evaluate and posit. This was the stage where new trails emerged and I had the opportunity to focus in on previously ignored comments. I would recommend the somewhat painful process of doing one's own transcription.

Not only does it assist in the maturation of interview technique, it can provide valuable insight into the interview itself. To listen over and over to a tape of an interview allows for continual reflection and evaluation and I believe is an important part of the hermeneutic process. That being said, time is also an important factor for a graduate student, especially one who is working as a full time teacher. I did pay a professional to transcribe the second round of interviews, however, I then found it valuable to listen to the tapes as I read through the transcript. If I had not listened to the tapes again I would have missed many nuances and subtleties not reflected in the transcripts alone.

As I listened to the tapes and read the transcripts I began to sort the conversations into themes. This process ended up in a flow chart where I tried to categorize everything according to where it fit thematically. Once I was comfortable with the initial organization, I copied each player's transcripts onto a different colour paper and proceeded to code their comments according to a theme. Each coded conversation was then cut out and placed into an envelope with matching discussions from the other players. Unknowingly, this method forced me to read each conversation over and over and therefore caused me to re-align my thematic diagram based on continual reflection of the transcripts.

Once I was finally satisfied with the general themes emerging from the interviews, I made a large poster and spread out all the multi-coloured conversation relating to that area. The next step was to sort each poster and sometimes move a conversation from one poster to the next. Once the final organization was complete, I glued all the coloured pieces to each poster and proceeded to write. The advantage of

this process was that although I now had all interview material thematically arranged, I could also go back and track this information in each individual transcript to be sure it was not taken out of context.

Ethical Considerations

The research process has passed through my supervisory committee as well as the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Ethics Board. Signed letters of permission were obtained from both the participants and their parents (Appendices A, B, C, & D). An introductory cover letter explaining the purpose and characteristics of the study was attached to the consent form. League names, team names, specific details and all players' names have been changed in order to preserve the privacy of the participants. In addition to these basic precautions I wanted to be sure that I conducted my interviews ethically, keeping the participants interests and care at the forefront. If anything controversial or sensitive came up, I was receptive to shutting down part, or all of the process to preserve the integrity of the participants.

Presentation of Findings

I have organized the findings into the following two chapters. Chapter Four is entirely consumed with participant portraits. These are intended for the reader to begin to get to know each participant and remember that these are teens and real people – not subjects but participants. Although they are but a fleeting snapshot the hope is that readers begin to paint a mental picture of each participant and can build that image as they go through the data.

Chapter Five is organized according to the four main themes that emerged: Time, Competition, Structure and Adults. I have made a conscious choice to blend

the analysis and discussion together under each theme rather than to split these two sections up as is more commonly done. I felt that for this particular paper, keeping the analysis and discussion together allowed for a clearer view of the four themes and kept the reader focussed as opposed to jumping back and forth between themes, analysis and discussion. A general discussion follows in Chapter Six.

Chapter Four: Participant Portraits

Tier One: Brad, Allan, Ed and Nick

"Brad"

Brad is a Tier 1 goalie. He began his hockey career at age 7 as a right winger, but moved to goalie in his third year of participation. He is an athletic middle child, who excels in school and sports. He loves to play volleyball and baseball as well as hockey. Last year, and every year previously, Tier 5 was the highest level he played. He attributes his jump to Tier 1 to practicing hard and having his older brother fire shots at him. Brad loves to win and enjoys the post-win celebrations, especially if there is pizza involved. He also loves hockey because of the relationships he builds with his teammates. Brad's parents are supportive and attend most of his games. His dad coaches baseball and volleyball as well as Brad's brother's hockey team. Brad submitted a drawing entitled "Best Day Ever" for his pre-interview activity. This pencil drawing, overlaid with five different colours, included stickman drawings of six smiling hockey players with gold medals around their necks, a scoreboard showing their team winning 4-3 and a large group of very happy players each with a pizza in front of them at a Boston Pizza restaurant.

"Allan"

Allan is a Tier 1 defenceman. His hockey idol is Bobby Orr – the ultimate offensive defenceman in major league hockey. Allan began playing hockey at age 4 and moved to league play at 5. When he was 7, he discovered how to shoot the puck up high. From that point on he began to score a lot of goals and his hockey career took off from there. He plays lacrosse and football as well, however, hockey remains

his true passion. Allan is an extremely dedicated and motivated player who firmly believes he has what it takes to make it all the way to the professional ranks of the National Hockey League. He practices constantly, including time with a private trainer, shinny at a couple local outdoor rinks as well as shooting pucks off of a piece of plexiglass in his backyard for lack of ice. Not only does Allan play Tier 1, he also plays summer hockey and has been recruited for tournaments by other teams. His father is very involved in Allan's hockey life and pushes Allan to excel, almost as hard as Allan pushes himself. Allan declined to submit a pre-interview activity.

"Ed"

Ed is a Tier 1 forward. He is a big kid who seems to be very shy but opens up once he gets to know you better. Ed began skating at four and playing organized hockey at 7 or 8 years old. Ed is very much into sports and also plays football, basketball and soccer. He has one older brother who is also into sports and quite successful. His family is very supportive, however, they also seem to put a lot of pressure on him to stay in hockey. He feels that hockey can sometimes interfere with his social life due to the huge time commitment required. If Ed could be anything he would be a receiver in professional football. As a pre-interview activity, Ed selected number six, "Make a diagram of a place that is important to you and use notes or key words to indicate what happens where in that place." He presented me with a very detailed pencil drawing layout of his room at home. Ed had taken great pains to use a ruler to keep everything straight and labelled everything in detail, right down to what posters are on the wall. He included the key words relaxing, quite (quiet), thoughtful,

good memories, bad memories, loud, fun, my space, comfy, my likes and my stuff. The room also contains a prominent place for Ed's accumulated trophies and medals.

"Nick"

Nick is a Tier 1 forward. In his hockey career thus far he has been a defenceman, a centreman and now he has settled at left wing. He would like to be a professional golfer some day, but still keep playing hockey on the side. Nick plays whatever sports he is able to, including basketball, volleyball, soccer, mountain biking, badminton and golf. His whole family is involved in hockey: Dad assistant coaches and still plays once a week, older and younger brother play, mom and grandma watch nearly every game. Nick gives his all no matter what sport he is in. Nick is very talkative and quite expressive with his thoughts. His favourite NHL player is Wayne Gretzky because he makes good plays and is smart. Nick is an aggressive kid who won't back down, is not afraid to speak his mind and has no problem challenging himself with a new skill or sport. His pre-interview activity was a tribute drawing to hockey. He included: goal pads - because he likes to score, a Team Canada jersey (#99 of course) - he wants to play for his country, a hockey stick - kind of hard to play without one, skates – it is fun to fly down the ice and finally, an Oilers logo – have to cheer for the home team!

Tier Two: Jack and Ryan

"Jack"

Jack is a Tier 2 defenceman. Since he is unable to choose between the two, he would like to be a professional snowboarder and hockey player at the same time. His favourite player is Steve Staios of the Edmonton Oilers. Jack is the oldest child and

his whole family is involved in hockey. All of his brothers play, his dad coaches and his mom rarely misses a game. He is very soft spoken and well liked by his peers. During any free time, Jack likes to play basketball, road hockey or video games with his friends. Jack's pre-interview submission consisted of a full page drawing of Steve Staios done only in pencil. The picture is quite detailed with the Oiler's logo on the front of the jersey and the "Taks" (CCM brand name of skates) name on his skates. The drawing is topped off with a large smile complete with missing teeth.

"Ryan"

Ryan is a Tier 2 defenceman. He will play any sport, anytime. Currently his two big sports are hockey and lacrosse but he also plays basketball. Ryan started playing hockey at age 8 but is currently feeling a little disillusioned with the sport. He feels the tiering rounds don't distribute the players properly. He figures he will play until he is 18 or so but at that point will drop hockey to do some other things like golf or mountain bike. He is a very social person who likes to surf the web and chat online with his friends. Ryan is the only hockey player in his family, his sister dances and his dad played basketball. As soon as Ryan began playing hockey, however, his dad began coaching along with him. Ryan's favourite NHL player is Joe Sakic. This choice seems appropriate because Ryan likes the intelligence aspects of the game, just like Sakic. Ryan used to dream of playing professional hockey, now he thinks he will be an engineer so he can make some good money, invent stuff and use his brain. For his pre-interview activity, Ryan drew a lacrosse game with a huge goalie in a tiny net and two forwards coming in on goal. Ryan is the one with the ball and he told me that he is going to make the sweet play to the other guy who will then score the goal.

Tier Six: Colin and Darren

"Colin"

Colin is a Tier 6 defenceman and left winger. He has been playing organized hockey since grade one or two. There is only one thing Colin does not like about hockey - the fact that he can't play more often! His hockey hero is Wayne Gretzky and Colin likes him because he is really good and can score goals. Colin also plays basketball and soccer. His mom is very supportive and does not allow video games in the house to encourage Colin to be active. Although she thinks the equipment is expensive, she uses occasions like birthdays and Christmas to buy Colin hockey equipment like a composite stick. Someday, Colin would like to be a professional hockey player so that people would look up to him. For the last two years he has been an assistant captain for his team and enjoys both the extra responsibility and prestige that go along with the position.

"Darren"

Darren is a Tier 6 defenceman. He is a very eloquent and mature young man. According to him, he began his hockey career "late", not starting organized league play until grade two. Although Darren enjoys hockey, his true love is golf. Darren would like to be a professional golfer and win the Masters some day. His sports idol is Mike Weir, the Canadian golfer. Darren's family is very sports oriented, however, they stress the fun aspect of the game. His dad coaches in the same organization, however, he only coaches the lower tiers because he believes the upper tiers are too political and intense. Darren has a younger brother who plays tier two hockey and according to Darren is "incredible". For himself, Darren figures he'll try and play one

more year and see how he does. If the year is good and he is tiered where he thinks he should be, he'll play again. If not, then that's it for organized hockey. Darren has a lot of choice in terms of his activities, but his parents require that he play a winter and a summer sport to stay active. As far as he is concerned, hockey and golf fill those spaces quite nicely. Darren's submission for the pre-interview activity is a very colourful drawing of hole four (par 3) at a local golf course. The perspective is from the pin back to the tee box and he has even included the 100 yard marker in the middle of the fairway as well as the sand traps, rough and narrow fairway. This drawing is his favourite hole on the course and one on which his continual goal is a birdie (one under par). He has not done it yet, but is certain he will – next summer!

Chapter Five: Emerging Themes

The basic premise for this study was to get at the heart of how this particular group of Pee Wee hockey players experience fun. My overall guiding principle, therefore, was to look for instances of fun within the context of minor hockey. As we conversed, four basic themes emerged around this idea: time, competition, structure and adults. All participants discussed these themes in different ways, with different reflections and ideas. Each theme contained elements of fun, the lack thereof and opportunities for enhancement. Please keep in mind that these four themes emerged directly from interviews with each player, I did not have a pre-set list. As such, I believe these themes form the foundation of what is important for these athletes who themselves were involved in minor hockey. After all, these are the areas of concern and importance to these teens. I have also chosen not to delineate between individual and group interviews. Although data was collected using both methods, due to the thematic approach, I did not feel that the type of data collection had a measurable effect on the information shared.

Theme One: Timely Fun

Sacrifices.

"It takes up so much time you have to sacrifice a lot of time for it. In one hockey season you probably sacrifice more than a week in solid hockey – just straight hockey. So that's a lot." (Darren)

Minor hockey is a huge time commitment. Depending on the tier a player is in and how far into playoffs his team goes, hockey can last from September to April. This time block can include two to three practices a week, one to three games a week and anywhere from one to eight tournaments a year. This commitment doesn't

include spring and summer hockey, specialized camps, power skating courses and extra training. Most of the players expressed little regret for the time factor required. A common "It's worth it" theme emerged. Although the players recognize the time sacrifice for hockey, at the same time, hockey is able to fulfill some of their needs for activity, play, socialization and fun. In the words of Brett, "It's a bunch of plusses!"

Players compensate for missed peer social time by socializing with team-mates. Hockey can become the hub around which their social life revolves as will be seen in the later section on friends and relationships. The level of commitment depends on the individual player but is also influenced by the level of hockey they play. The tier one participants, Ed, Brad, Nick and Allan, for the most part, placed hockey before birthday parties, family dinners and socializing. Of the tier one players, Ed seemed to miss his non-hockey peers more than the others. This fact may be due to the fact that he is a grade above the other boys and therefore has no classmates on his team. Colin, who plays at a much lower tier with Darren, had no problem missing hockey games for family camping trips. Darren has decided not to miss any hockey for special events. This decision may be due in part to the fact that his dad is an assistant coach.

The players recognize that activity is valuable. "Yeah, it's fun. "Better than sitting at home watching T.V. or vegging out on the couch or something" (Aaron). They are also able to choose where they will obtain their fun. Hockey is fun for them, so they don't mind sacrificing some other sources of fun in order to pursue hockey.

Darren entered three tournaments at Tier Six, his little brother in Tier Two played seven tournaments, most of those out of town. All of the participants were in

grade 7, except Ed who is in grade 8. At this age they have also just made the move from elementary school to junior high with the extra stress and homework that goes along with that transition. When the regular season is over, players and their parents can choose from spring hockey, summer hockey, roller hockey or attend any of the numerous power skating and hockey camps offered in the area.

Doug: What about the time factor? Tell me about how much time you spend on hockey.

Colin: Like two games every weekend and three practices every week.

Brad: It's most of the day pretty well. Like on school days if you have a game it will be almost the whole day so you don't have much time at home.

Allan: It's pretty time consuming. You have to do your homework right when you get home or whenever you can. Stuff like that. Lots of time taken.

Ryan: No, it's just… I just don't like the time placements. I'd rather play on the weekdays instead of the weekends. This weekend was so tiring. I had lacrosse at 11:00 on Saturday and then hockey at 1:30. On Sunday I had hockey at 10:30 and then lacrosse at 4:30. Showers kinda revitalize me and stuff so I'm ready to go after that.

Invariably, if hockey takes up so much time, something has to give. I asked the players what kind of sacrifices they had to make in order to play hockey for their particular team. The answer came quicker than I thought and they all mentioned

social situations or opportunities as the major sacrifice. Schoolwork for these players was not compromised as a result of playing hockey. In fact, most mentioned that they had to focus more and get homework done first, prior to hockey commitments.

Colin: Well, I just have to get my homework done quicker and stay caught up in school and stuff. Sometimes on a long weekend or something I have some hockey games but we want to go camping or something I would probably miss hockey anyway. Then we could go camping or something.

Allan: Probably a little bit of social time, sacrificing, a little bit of free time, like just going and hanging out with some friends or something.

Darren: I think I had to sacrifice one birthday party but that wasn't much. Good dinners.

Ryan: I usually like to talk with friends on the weekend, go hang out and stuff. Now in spring hockey I have to be on the ice once or twice a day. I don't know, it takes a lot of time and effort to play hockey. Sometimes you have to miss school and other events that you would like to go to.

Nick: Well, maybe miss a couple of parties for the family or something to go to a hockey game that I have to play in, it's usually a big game and if I miss a game the guys will think, oh yeah, he goes to a party to miss a hockey game. So I don't want the guys to think that, I don't want them to think that I'm

just gonna quit just to go and do something that's fun. I like hockey, that's why I'm here.

Of all the participants, Ed, the only player in grade eight, expressed a greater amount of remorse for the time and social opportunities missed. It seemed especially hard for Ed at the beginning of the season.

Doug: You talked about being a little tired and not wanting to play at the beginning of the season but what would make you just say no, I'm not playing?

Ed: Hmm. For more free time. So you can hang out with friends and stuff like that. That's another reason why I wasn't, why I sometimes don't want to at the start of the year. So I'd have more time to be with people.

There are so many other things that he wants to do but hockey tends to shove everything else over. I really got the sense from Ed that he would like another option. He still loves to play hockey, however, he would like some time to do some other things as well.

Celebrations and Socialization.

"I like being on an actual team, like when we go to a tournament and the hotels and stuff that we stay at. Sleep over at other people's hotels and stuff." (Colin)

As stated, each player is fully cognizant of the enormous time commitment that hockey can be at the Pee Wee level. Each player I interviewed was at least a four-year veteran of minor hockey. For Allan, organized hockey has been a part of his life for eight years, not bad for someone only recently reaching the ripe old age of

thirteen. Obviously, there must be some sort of trade off in place to merit all the time dedicated to the sport.

Doug: Is it too much? Does all that hockey wear you out? Is it worth it?

Allan: No, it's good. Yeah, it's fun. Better than just sitting at home watching T.V., or vegging out on the couch or something.

Colin: No, I like hockey.

Nick: No, it doesn't wear me out. Just as long as I play.

First off, these players LIKE hockey. Not one participant shared with me that his parents are making him play. Even Ed, who has second thoughts at the beginning of each season, still very much enjoys playing hockey. Second, friends and the relationships developed through hockey interspersed our discussions of fun. Time lost socializing outside of the arena was often traded for socialization inside the rink and the locker room. For most of the players, having friends on the team was an important factor. Two players mentioned this fact more than the others and I tried to follow this tangent as far as I could with Ryan and Brad.

Doug: Who would you rather have on your team, a friend or a more skilled player? Why?

Ryan: A friend. Well, friends, they like help you out and you can make them better by also making yourself better and you could both get better. Halfway through the year you could be just as good as that skilled player.

Doug: Would you rather just have a group of guys that go all the way through? (as opposed to a different group of players every year)

Ryan: Yeah. You learn their abilities and habits and their attitudes and style and stuff. You can just do better with that team than a completely new team. You don't know much about anybody.

Doug: What's better about being able to play with friends on the team?

Brad: It's fun in the dressing room – things like that.

Doug: Do you think you could play with a bunch of guys you don't know at all?

Brad: Well, I could, but then I would try and get to know them. Cause it's just more fun playing with like friends than with people you don't know.

Allan was the one exception on this subject. When asked if he needed to have friends on the team his answer was short and to the point, "No."

For these players, the other aspect of hockey that made up for the time commitment was the whole concept of being part of a team. They all had team jackets in distinctive colours with their name and position on the sleeve. Some had baseball caps or toques as well to help them identify as part of a team. This feeling of belonging to something bigger than self manifested itself even more on road trips. For many of the players, being a part of the team is a key element of the fun they experience through hockey. There is a sense of all of them being in this together and enjoying the high and low times as a group.

Doug: What do you enjoy the most about hockey?

Brad: Hanging out with the other players and winning, things like that. Being with your team.

Colin: Being on an actual team, like when we go to a tournament and the hotels and stuff that we stay at. Sleep over at other people's hotels and stuff.

Allan: Getting better or meeting new people and that's about it.

Darren: Well, you get to meet a bunch of friends and it's just fun, after the games, it's celebrations…

Ryan: Seeing all your friends. They help you out and you get to play with them and have fun with them.

Nick: Playing. Playing with the guys on the team, hitting, scoring, but that's not always going to happen. Having a good time with the other guys, I already said that.

Like Darren, a number of the players discussed the celebrations involved with hockey – usually associated with winning. I asked Allan how he felt after a great hockey game and he responded, "Ah, fun, like happy, feel like I wanna go out and eat some pizza!" Brad talked at length about a particular celebration that occurred after his team (on which Nick, Allan and Ed also play) won the provincial championship. This is the same event that Brad featured in his pre-interview activity so beautifully.

Brad: We just go out for pizza. Fool around some. We took all the sugars and put them in our pops.

Doug: What do you guys talk about?

Brad: I don't know, just different things, all kinds.

Doug: Do you talk about the game?

Brad: Not really.

I found it very interesting that the players didn't really talk about the game at all during their big celebration. I am quite sure that the parents were re-hashing over every play, especially in a 4-3 win at a Provincial final. Meanwhile, the players themselves are putting sugar in their pop and acting well, like kids. This type of socialization during hockey helps to make up for all the time taken by practices and games.

Darren also mentioned the idea of a coach becoming a friend. Many teams have young coaches or assistants and their impact on the players can be quite substantial. This connection is an important part of the socialization factor as older role models can really help a player along. It was a very big deal for Darren that his coach wants to have a relationship with him outside of the game. "I think it's worth it (hockey) because you get to meet a bunch of people, you get to have fun with coaches. My coach this year said he was gonna go golfing with me this summer. So you get friends for life and it's a whole bunch of fun and then it occupies you and it's exercise, so a bunch of pluses."

Theme Two: Competitive Fun

The topic of competition as related to fun came up frequently in our discussions. Overwhelmingly, the conversations around competition were positive. These players enjoy competition and they use it to improve their individual and team play. For them, competition is a healthy and natural process, integral to the sport.

Two general themes emerged. The first I have entitled: winning, losing and learning. We had some engaging discussion around that concept with competition intertwined around all three concepts. The second theme was the relationship between skill and challenge. In this instance, fun was referenced to include competition with oneself or others. Generally, it was fun to do something if it was challenging. If a skill was difficult, it was worth learning. Likewise, it was fun to play a close game rather than blow a team out of the water. This parallels Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Model (1975) in which enjoyment is defined as a delicate balance between the challenges of a particular activity and the skill level of the participant. If the challenge is too great for the participant's skills, anxiety is experienced, Conversely, if the participant's skills are not appropriately challenged by the activity, boredom is the result. *Flow* occurs when the challenge and skill are equal and the experience is ideal.

Winning, Losing and Learning.

"Love to win, hate to lose. It's always fun when you go out, play really good and then win." (Allan)

Ultimately, winning is fun. All the players at some time connected winning games to having fun. Jack mentioned that he feels successful and has fun when he wins minor hockey week or a tournament. Scanlon (1982) suggests that for children in competitive sport, it is crucial to encourage intrinsic motivation through goal setting. In this way, the emphasis is taken off of winning and placed firmly on the process of skill development and improvement. Conversations about winning and losing, however, also took some interesting twists. Allan, Nick and Brad talked the most about winning as the ultimate goal in hockey. All three are quite competitive and play in Tier One.

Doug: Why do you like to win?

Brad: Probably cause I'm pretty competitive. Winning is fun because it feels good. Like sometimes if you lose, someone will say it was your fault because usually the goalie gets blamed for most things.

Doug: What's your favourite part of competition?

Brad: Facing rivals, people that are as good as you. If they beat you before, getting them back for it. It's fun when the game is close because then it's just like your trying hard to get the points.

Doug: Is that a factor for you? The more even the teams are the more competition and the more you are in the game?

Brad: Yeah, there was one game this year where I got like four shots the whole game. We won 16 nothing. I'm probably the most in the game when the other teams outplay, but that never happened this year because we were like the best team.

Brad clearly understands the relationship between skill and challenge. His experiences in goal mirror the Flow Model (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). In fact, as a goalie, he most often experiences this enjoyment when the rest of his team does not. The worse they play the more shots he has to take. As long as the challenge remains within his skill level, those types of games provide the greatest opportunity for *flow*.

Doug: What are the most fun moments for you in hockey?

Allan: Probably winning the big games.

Doug: Tell me more about competing.

Allan: Love to win, hate to lose. It's always fun when you go out, play really good and then win.

Doug: Would you rather win by a little or a lot?

Allan: A little, because when you win by a little bit its all the, I forget what its called – its there – its more fun. Cause in an 8-1 game you know it was sorta easy, you didn't have to do everything right.

Doug: Tell me about losing.

Allan: Not a good feeling. When you lose those important games it's not that great. Feels like a rock hit you in the head.

Doug: When do you learn more – when you lose a game or win a game?

Allan: When you lose because you know what you did wrong or right and you fix those. When you win a game you sort of forget all the things you did wrong and you do it again.

Allan also experiences *flow* primarily during those close games when you have to do everything right. I got the feeling from our conversations that Allan needed a few close losses from time to time to learn more and improve his skills so as to be ready for the next challenge. He did not have as much to learn from an 8-1 blowout as from a 3-4 loss.

Doug: What makes you feel successful?

Nick: All the city championships we've won and playoffs and tournaments. Winning gold medals… The experience. We

usually go to like the gold or bronze medal games. It's fun being there because your picture gets put in the paper and it get like… my mom, she mails the pictures to the hockey hall of fame and it's in the cabinet. Two of them are right now.

Doug: Which do you prefer, competing against others like in hockey, or competing against yourself like in golf?

Nick: Hockey, because you're against all these guys and you want to prove that you're better than them and that's sometimes good cause that can make you happy and if you just beat yourself that can make you happy too, but I prefer to beat other people.

Doug: Why?

Nick: I don't know. Because I'm better. I like being better.

Doug: What happens when you lose and you are not better?

Nick: I just try harder next time.

Nick is a very competitive player, who seems to need more exterior recognition to feel successful. He places a high value on public acknowledgement (trophies, medals, media attention). Nick does not mention the relationship between skills and challenge as much as the others, perhaps because you get a medal whether you win by one goal or five.

Although each of the other players also talked about winning and losing, it did not seem so crucial to them. This study did not attempt to delve into those reasons, although I would speculate it depends on a tenuous relationship between the level of play, expectations of adults and personal motivations for success. Ed was not

bothered much by losing games. He expressed a bit of sorrow and then said, "You have to move on, it's just a game." When asked what was good about winning, Colin gave the thought provoking reply of, "That you won." And then gave me a funny look as if to say, "Hello! It's pretty obvious!" He also expressed the view that losing a game involved more learning than winning. In my interviewing, I found that these minor hockey players emulate their professional peers when it comes to clichés. Especially when talking to the media, NHL players often use phrases such as, "It was a team effort" and, "We gave 110% out there." Ryan was quick to use a cliché of his own regarding winning and in his best interview voice stated, "It's just the opposite of losing. Speak little when you lose, speak less when you win."

Challenge and Skill.

"Like the first time you go off a jump on a snowboard or skateboard and then you just keep doing it over and over until you can do it. Finally get the feeling when you finally do it." (Allan)

In their 1989 study, Wankel and Sefton made note of the close relationship between the level of challenge and the level of skill. The closer these two can be, the more enjoyment is possible. This occurs two ways in minor hockey. The first is during game play. Players found games to be more fun when the challenge was appropriate. In other words, close games are more fun than blowouts.

Doug: What's your favourite part of a hockey game?

Colin: When it's close – like when it's a good match up. It's exciting and it's not like one team is killing the other 10-0.

Doug: So an overtime game that you lose can still be fun?

Colin: Yeah.

Darren: If you don't get too hectic about competition it can be fun. But if you get too intense and you think that it's the only thing in the world it get a little… why am I doing this… So it can be fun, just don't go crazy.

Doug: Do you find competition fun?

Darren: I do. I really find pressure awesome. I like pressure and I don't know why, I just do. It just gives me an adrenaline rush.

Jack shared a specific game with me in which his team got a hard fought win over a team who probably was a little bit better. He said that this particular game was the "sweetest".

> Last game of the playoffs. It was against the Falcons. In the first period they scored four goals, I think, and then we scored a goal. We scored two in the second (period) and one more in the third (period) and then with about five minutes left there was a big scramble in front. Someone passed it in front and got it to Ryan, Ryan tipped it in and scored. The winning goal.

In a game like this, there is obviously pressure, however, these are the games where the players felt the largest sense of accomplishment. All of the players mentioned at some point dissatisfaction with a blow out game – whether they were on the winning side or not. Although heart breaking, a 4-3 loss to a good team in a game where the team and the individual played their best was more rewarding than the aforementioned blow-out win.

The second part of the challenge / skill relationship comes through personal skill building and the search for a challenge. This juxtaposition can come through a

structured practice organized by coaches or through unstructured personal exploration. Since I will explore the concept of organized practice in another section, this portion will focus on self-exploration. When I asked Allan to clarify his statement of, "Cause it's fun trying to do that one more thing" he beautifully illustrated his comment with an example of snow or skateboarding.

> Like the first time you go off a jump on a snowboard or skateboard and then you just keep doing it over and over until you can do it. Finally get the feeling when you finally do it.

Allan is describing the intrinsic motivation that operates outside of the extrinsic motivations such as winning, medals and pizza. Jack mentions feeling successful if he knows that he worked hard and played his best – regardless of the outcome of the game. Of course, it is always nice to have the bonus of winning, but that is not what keeps these players coming back year after year. Hockey is a complicated game made more difficult by performing at high speeds in an enclosed area. The participants expressed enjoyment in practicing the many skills required provided that the form of practice was interesting. Many players hone their skills outside of scheduled practices and games by playing shinny (minimum equipment, no hitting and no raises) at the local outdoor rink, street hockey with friends or simply shooting on a net or at the basement wall with a tennis ball. These "practice sessions" allow the players to set their own goals, decide how to reach them, control all the variables and play as long and hard as they need to succeed. Or at least until a parent calls them in for supper…

Theme Three: Structural Fun

Over the course of the interviews, one of the most frequent topics was the structure of minor hockey. This conversation included practices, games and contact. Games have been covered in the previous section and will also be discussed as part of practices. Most teams practice between one and three times a week depending on how far along they are in the season. The purpose of a practice should be to learn new skills, improve current skills and recreate game-like situations. For many of the participants, practices were boring, deemed unnecessary and overall considered a waste of time. In terms of the new rules for contact introduced at the Pee Wee level, practices were also inadequate for the development of these young players.

Practice Makes Perfect.

"...usually the coaches make you skate a lot and it's tiring" (Ed)

As I talked to the participants, several issues related to practicing became prevalent. There was also a variety of opinions regarding the type of practicing that went on and how effective this practice actually was. All of the participants were unanimous in their disdain for "skating drills," although some recognized the payoff those drills could make during a game.

Doug: Why don't you like practices?

Darren: There's just so much that you have to do. You have to do skating every 5 minutes, you get tired and it's, it eats up a bunch of your day. It eats up at least three hours of your day. And it's just like, I have no day left or I have to go to school tomorrow or geez, I forgot my homework.

Ed: Because usually the coaches make you skate a lot and it's tiring.

Nick: ...the ones we just do hard work the whole time, I know it'll pay off but it's just so tiring you can barely walk sometimes after.

Over and over the players mentioned the tediousness of "drills", especially skating. Similar to the findings of Strean and Holt (2000), these players were being taught specific skills in isolation from the game itself. At times, they could make the connection to improved performance or being able to outstrip an opponent but the sheer tediousness of drills, especially skating drills, bored them. This discovery led to the inevitable question, "How could you make skating drills more fun?" The answers came back loud and clear. What Nick, Darren and Ed so eloquently stated is the fact that they want their drills to be more like a game. Integrate the skills and tie them to an outcome so they are not taught in isolation. Several of the players mentioned making drills more game-like or adding more competition to increase the enjoyment.

Doug: So you like to have a little competition then?

Darren: Yeah, just a little.

Doug: That increases your fun level?

Darren: It does.

Doug: So would I be correct in saying that the drills that are more fun for you are a little more game-like, or involve more than one aspect of the game?

Darren: Yes.

Doug: So instead of just skating: skate, stick handle, shoot?

Darren: Exactly!

Perhaps due to the type of practicing done, when I brought up the issue of games versus practice the athletes reiterated the importance of game-like practice.

Nick: I'd rather play a game because, well, in practice you just skate around your drills and stuff, work on your game. But in a game you get to actually do stuff and then I work hard. Like you want to, you get to actually do stuff. Some of the stuff you can't do in practice.

Allan: I think you learn more in the games, because you're actually challenging and in practice usually you're doing something without an opponent.

Colin brought a unique perspective to the idea of gradually improving and becoming a better hockey player. He feels that he has improved every year due to practicing and just being on the ice a lot. However, he attributes most of his improvement to his own practicing when playing "shinny" (unorganized pick-up games) as opposed to team practices. Colin felt that then he could select what he needed to improve on. When I asked which was more productive, his own practicing or teams he replied, "On my own, just with some other people, just sort of shinny. Shinny and on my own." Ryan managed to make the connection between skills learned in isolation and the promise of fun to come.

Yeah, if you work on the boring hard things and then you can figure them out and can do them really well and you go into a game and you can do that and the other players can't, you can do a lot more things, and skate faster, shoot

harder.

Out of all the participants, Allan is the one who practices the most, and the hardest. We had an intriguing conversation regarding fun, practicing, training and motivation.

Doug: I know you don't like skating drills right, but is the hard work worth it?

Allan: Yeah, it's worth it. You get better. Next time you will probably stop the guy instead of let him go around you.

Doug: Does it relate to fun at all?

Allan: Yeah, when like you feel the burn and then its fun cause you got better and then you do better in the game.

Doug: When you are doing a really tough work out – just dying out there – are you thinking, that's okay, it'll make me a better player?

Allan: Yeah. You feel your legs burning or something. You want to like, keep that burn. And then by the time you're done you know that your muscles are probably getting bigger now that you've actually – you didn't quit after being a little sore.

Doug: So there is a relationship between the work you do and the fun you have?

Allan: Yeah, the more work you do, the harder you try the more fun you have.

Allan works out twice a week with a private trainer who does dry-land training with him, largely focusing on core strength and stability. "Dry-land" is a term hockey players use to refer to any training or conditioning without skates on. In regular practices, that could include running stairs or laps in full equipment. Allan emulates his colleagues in the NHL by doing a lot of core stability exercises such as shooting pucks while standing on an exercise ball, as well as types of speed and reaction training. In addition he does a lot of shooting practice on his own in the back yard. Our conversation provides a window on his motivation and desire to constantly challenge himself through practice.

Doug: What is your motivation for all that dry-land training?

Allan: Just getting better from it, that's all I want. I'm getting stronger, like what I need for shooting the puck and skating faster and stuff like that. And it's actually pretty fun too, so I keep going back. *(interesting, because the rest of the kids HATE dryland training)*

Doug: Tell me more about your backyard practicing.

Allan: I usually just throw *(shoot a tennis ball with a hockey stick)* the ball against the wall, stuff like that, and then I have a net back there so I shoot on the net, stuff like that.

Doug: What's your motivation?

Allan: It's fun.

Doug: What's fun about it?

Allan: Just getting better.

Doug: So the fun is in the improvement?

Allan: Yeah, mostly. Getting better.

It's a Contact Sport.

"Hitting is something you do in hockey. It's a contact sport." (Darren)

The contact aspect of minor hockey, especially related to injuries has received more research than any other portion of the sport (Blanchard & Castaldi, 1991; Regnier, Bioleau, Marcotte et. al., 1989; Roberts, Brust, Leonard & Hebert, 1996; Tator & Edmonds, 1984). The American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Sports Medicine and Fitness released three recommendations in 2000.

1. Body checking should not be allowed in youth hockey for children age 15 years or younger.
2. Good sportsmanship programs, such as the fair play concept, have been shown to reduce injury and penalty rates and should be adopted for all levels of youth hockey.
3. Youth hockey programs need to educate players, coaches and parents about the importance of knowing and following the rules as well as the dangers of body checking another player from behind.

(Pediatrics, p. 658)

Despite the recommendations and research, each of the participants professed to not only like hitting, but actually enjoyed it as a fun part of the game. Hitting, also called full contact, or body checking, emerged as one of the key topics of this study. When they reach Pee Wee, players are now allowed to make full body contact (body check, hipcheck) on the puck carrier. Prior to Pee Wee the players are allowed to

contact each other along the boards and in front of the net but may not engage in checking an opponent. I found that this topic was raised repeatedly and kept growing the further we dug. Initially, the participants brought up the subject in response to the following question, "What is your favourite thing about hockey?"

Darren: The contact, definitely. Ya, it's awesome, hitting is fun! I was one of the best hitters on my team. Hipcheck.

Ryan: Hitting.

Colin: Umm, I like hitting, I like that it's physical so its easier to kinda play as opposed to like basketball or something like fouls and stuff.

When I asked the players to clarify why they liked hitting I received these types of responses:

Allan: You sorta get the opportunity to (hit) and then you have more freedom with the puck and you can try new moves because they sorta back off a bit.

Darren: Ya, as a defenceman, without the contact it's a little difficult cause then you can only play the puck and it's difficult. But when you can play the man, it's just like up close and bam!

Colin: I don't know, it's easier to get a guy cause in Atom it's easier to skate around a guy because there can't be any real body contact. So it's easier to control a guy.

When I asked him for his best moment as a defenceman Colin immediately shared a story about a really good, solid hit. "I clobbered a guy on the boards. Clean hip-

check. He was pretty big and he was just sorta skating slow and then I just hit him low and he went down." Not a single participant dwelled on any aspect of pain or discomfort due to hitting. For the defencemen, Darren, Ryan, Colin and Allan, bodychecking is simply another skill set with which to control the opposing forwards. It allows them to play "NHL Hockey" the same way as their heroes.

Despite the participants' descriptions of hitting as fun, and not being disturbed by contact, the discrepancies in amount of hitting instruction provided upon entry to Pee Wee hockey deserves further discussion. There seems to be no minimum standard of instruction, rather, the amount of time dedicated to the art of hitting and getting hit is solely up to the coach or individual parents. Hitting camps are available, but there are no requirements for attendance. Ryan struggled in his first year of Pee Wee due to a lack of hitting instruction. For him, a hitting camp over the summer provided him with the skills and confidence he needed to play a second season of full contact hockey. Darren and Nick both received a lot of hitting instruction prior to their first year of Pee Wee and experienced very little trouble transitioning to full contact. Allan, a very highly skilled player, had little difficulty with the jump to full contact despite the lack of training. He is the anomaly, the type of athlete that can pick up new skills up very quickly. He is also big and strong, able to withstand the "learning experiences" of a few hard hits from older players. Allan had his own clearly defined view of the contact issue: "Actually, I think we should start from right when they start (when children first start to play organized hockey), like when they are five so they get used to it and by the time they are getting big enough to really hurt someone they all know how to protect themselves." Darren sums up the issue

according to the players, "They are supposed to know how to take a hit and to hit. They should be able to know that and if they don't – teach them." Proper instruction in any skill is crucial to success, however, that instruction time gains even more import when it applies to something so potentially injurious as hitting.

As the participants and I continued to discuss hitting, we talked a lot about the beginning of their first season of Pee Wee. Each of them had very different experiences with their exposure to full contact hockey. Ryan, in particular, remembered his own experience very vividly.

Doug: When you came into Pee Wee from Atom did your coaches give you much instruction?

Ryan: No

Doug: They just kinda said, "You can hit now?"

Ryan: Ya.

Doug: What did you think about that?

Ryan: I didn't really like it. My dad didn't really like it either and I had a tough time starting out with the hitting thing. Like I always went for the puck and I usually missed and caused a goal."

Doug: When did you start to like hitting?

Ryan: I didn't really like it until last summer (after his first year of Pee Wee), when I went to a hitting camp and got all psyched up about hitting and started hitting a lot. Yeah, the camp really helped me out a lot. Got me ready for the second year and

whatever happens next. I didn't get much coaching from the coach I have had for a couple of years. He wasn't very skilled. You need to gradually work your way up, until you kinda know the hitting well and you can finish a check and actually hit someone. Start out small and work your way up.

Doug: So the biggest thing that could have made Pee Wee better is more hitting instruction?

Ryan: Yeah, it would probably help them out a lot. To learn about hitting and when to take a hit and stuff. To be more prepared for the first game.

Nick and Darren also mentioned the contributions of hitting camps to their own comfort level with hitting. When I asked them about the time spent on hitting instruction their answers were very similar.

Darren: I got a lot because that summer I went into two hitting camps and had a week straight of each hitting camp that was just an hour a day of hitting. I got lots of instruction and lots of exposure before the actual season started so I think I got a bit of a jumpstart into that.

Nick: We have a week-long clinic that my dad, they volunteer for, and my dad's been in it every year. So we went from Atom to Pee Wee and first thing we did we worked the first two, we worked on skating and stuff like that and then the last ones, for

> half or three-quarters of the practice almost was focussed on just hitting.

Neither Allan nor Colin mentioned anything about specific hitting camps. Colin, speaking about regular practice time stated, "We did lots of work on hitting. We would practice like twice a week." On the other hand, when I questioned Allan about the time spent he said, "Not that much. This year we spent about 5 minutes the whole year on hitting." Allan also shared that he didn't think players got enough instruction in their first year of Pee Wee. I asked him if any learned, "the hard way," meaning by getting caught with their head down and hurt. His reply was quiet, "Yeah, a couple do." When I asked Darren about an article in the paper advocating to remove hitting from minor hockey he reacted very quickly and said, "I say stop your whining. I mean that's one of the requirements of hockey. Hitting is something you do in hockey. It's a contact sport." Sometime after making that comment, Darren shared with me his perspective on the non-hitting leagues that are starting to pop up.

> I think they have just one practice at the beginning of the year, it was just to get to know people and show your skills and after that you said what position you wanted to play and then they put you there and it's just for fun. Well, it's more competitive. You go into tournaments, it's a full season, playoffs all that. It's still good stuff but in the non-hitting league it's just entirely fun. There's no tournaments, no competition, it's just go out there and shoot. It's just like shinny.

In discussion with the players involved in the study as well as other people involved in the sport of hockey it was difficult to decide why hitting has such a bad

rap in hockey. Football (American) has a major hitting component, yet does not seem to garner the press that hockey does. Recent media barrages related to such incidents as Todd Bertuzzi's dropping of Steve Moore with a sucker punch tend to focus on the fighting that can overshadow the professional game. All of the participants said that they enjoy hitting and that it was fun. We did not have the time to engage the subject further and try to figure out what exactly about hitting was fun or enjoyable. A study out of Australia, *Boys, Bodies, Pleasure and Pain: Interrogating Contact Sports in Schools* (Gard & Meyenn, 2000) looked very interesting and I had hoped that it would begin to explore the enjoyment of contact. Unfortunately, the study degenerated into a commentary on perceived hegemony and pain as a "currency" for embodied masculine identities. This is definitely an area that deserves further research – research that allows the participants to speak for themselves.

From my own perspective, the physical aspect of the game is one that I also enjoy immensely. It is not about power or asserting dominance over an opponent, rather it is a further testing of skills – albeit perhaps more primal ones than skating and scoring. If full contact was not part of the NHL or Olympic Men's hockey, would these players still want to partake? Olympic Women's hockey does not allow full contact and I think the game is missing something as a result. Part of the issue may have to do with the speed at which hockey is played. Skates give athletes the ability to move much faster than their sneaker-clad peers in football or rugby. Even an accidental collision on the ice is exacerbated by the extreme speeds at which they can occur. Perhaps this factor could be ameliorated by proper instruction and officiating to ensure all contact is legal and fair conduct.

Theme Four: Funny Adults

Other than hitting, the topic of adult involvement generated the most response from the players. I have split this theme into two major sections: coaches and parents. Spectators are not included in this grouping due to the fact that at this level of hockey, the vast majority are directly related to the players. None of the participants talked about any spectators that were not related to an on-ice player. Referees are another category of adults that could have been included in this study, however, they were seldom mentioned and then always in relation to comments on parents or coaches.

Let Us Play! Cheer Us On!

"...if the ref makes a bad call, don't scream and get all mad, cause we can't change that. We just want to hear good job, nice pass and stuff, nice goal, nice hit or something like that." (Jack)

Parents are a huge part of minor hockey. They coach, manage, fundraise, drive, cheer, support, pressure, encourage and get involved any way they can. Most of the parent stories are very encouraging, with any reference to "bad parents" being few and always from another team. Although some comments address negative issues, it becomes pretty clear that all the participants want is for their parents to be at the games, cheer them on and drive them home. I felt it was important to share each player's response to the same question. Look carefully at what they have to say.

Doug: What advice would you give to parents?

Brad: Probably, only like talk to them (parents to players) if they like ask for something, like if they were to ask something about the game, then like help them. But if they (player) don't talk about anything then don't worry about it. Also just cheering and

saying 'Good Game' and stuff like that. Tell the parents like just to, that it's for the kids, not really for the parents.

Ed: Like not to get angry about what the players are doing and they're a big part of it because they have to drive them and everything and they paid to do it. So they should enjoy it too. Um, and not to get angry at their son but encourage them. That's about all you have to do as a parent or as a fan, just cheer us on and have fun. Try to go to the games instead of phoning someone to drive them there, Things like that."

Darren: Cheer us on like heck! Gives us momentum, makes us play better and we just work great that way. We feel we're a team, we feel the fans think we're a team. Ah, the things I would tell them not to do would be to bully the refs because then they can give our team a 2 minute bench minor. Unfortunately, that is how it can work but…

Nick: Keep being positive towards the players and the coaches. Say good game and great job. Tell maybe the coaches if you see something happening like maybe someone's not contributing like, they are not doing what they are supposed to be, you just tell them that, that the team needs to work on something.

Allan: Cheer louder!" Cheering their kids on, telling them that they're doing great and things like that.

Jack: Probably, if the ref makes a bad call, don't scream and get all mad, cause we can't change that. We can't change that if you scream and yell. And don't say bad things comparing other people. We just want to hear, good job, nice pass and stuff, nice goal, nice hit or something like that.

Some participants mentioned a bad, or embarrassing incident involving parents, however, most did not explicitly share much regarding their own parents unless it was positive. As mentioned in a prior chapter, this development may be due in part to the fact that I also taught all and coached most of these participants and knew their parents. They may have been reluctant to share any negative stories regarding their own parents. With Ed, although he did share some difficulties with his parents without reservation, I sometimes wondered if the stories he shared about a "parent" were actually about his own. Enigk (2002) studied the frequency and nature of adult comments at Little League baseball games. Overall, it was observed that more positive comments were made in comparison to negative comments. As well, the adults themselves believed that more positive comments were made at games (survey data analysis).

Nick: Parents are usually pretty good except for when they talk to the refs. (What do they say?) Get your head out of your ass! That's like, classic.

Ed: Once, before one game a parent was getting mad at their son because of last game when he didn't do very well and he knew he didn't, but they were still getting mad at him. Then on the

ice, he was angry and wasn't doing well either because he was angry.

Ryan: I've never really seen a bad parent. Mostly they're pretty good.

Brad: Like he was saying things to one of our coaches. I didn't really hear it, I don't know what he was saying because I was like over by the middle of the bench. I don't like when parents get all mad and get tossed. They get all mad and then they like start making comments to the bench. Against Calgary, I think, one of their parents got tossed out of the game.

Colin: Parents? Some on the other team were yelling and screaming because the refs were sort of leaning towards our side for some reason and they got kicked out. But I don't think anything on our team's parents. I'd be embarrassed if my mom got kicked out.

As with coaches, parents often comment to their children before, during or after a game. There are also many different ways for parents to show support. Participants were quite clear in how they wanted to be supported and knew specifically what they wanted to hear from their parents.

Brad: It's good to hear the cheering after you make a good save. I like to hear how I had some good saves, good game, like awesome game, things like that.

Ryan: Just sit there and watch the game. Say things like, good job and keep it up and you had like a nice shot and give you a bunch of confidence and stuff.

Allan: Cheer really loud, don't boo other teams, be nice to everybody. Leave the advice to the coaches. Like sometimes your parents don't know what they're talking about. Like when your parent says, like step up on the forward when he's coming down on you, maybe the coach thinks differently.

Colin: Good game, or that I'm learning lots and improving I guess, ya.

Ed in particular seems to have issue with his parents, mostly over his continued involvement with hockey. This conflict may be partially due to the influence of an older brother whose footsteps Ed is following. His comments shed some light on the tenuous relationship that can exist between minor hockey parent and child. Ed's mom and dad are not terrible parents. On the contrary, they are supportive, loving and disciplined. I just don't think that they understand hockey as Ed understands hockey. What Ed's parents understand as the reasons for playing hockey are not always the same as Ed's. At times, it seems like two people trying to have a conversation without listening to each other. Ed and I had quite a long conversation and I think he needed to feel that someone was listening to his point of view and trying to understand him. I have included most of our conversation in its entirety to preserve the feel and tempo of the discussion.

Doug: Would you rather have spectators, or just the coach and players?

Ed: Just the coach and the players

Doug: How come?

Ed: Because it gets you sort of nervous sometimes to see a whole bunch of people up there. Or else you just sort of ignore them and then it's only the coach and the players. It's good if they (parents) will drive you there but it's not really, sometimes it's not good to have them there.

Doug: Sometimes you just want them to drive you there but not stay?

Ed: Ya. (Earlier, Ed had mentioned that parents can encourage by driving their kids to games, not phoning others to do it.)

Doug: So, on the one hand, it's encouraging to have parents at the game, but if they are ragging on players and doing stuff like that…

Ed: I wish they weren't there.

No matter how many times I read this line, or listened to the tape, I am always stopped in my tracks to hear a child say, "I wish they weren't there" about their parents. Again, I don't think Ed's parents are particularly malevolent, in fact they are quite nice people who care for their son deeply. Why they can't seem to communicate in this situation is beyond the scope of this research project.

Five of the participants commented about possible pressure from parents and how it affects their relationships. Ryan's dad never had any exposure to hockey until Ryan began to play. Since then he has learned to coach and has coached Ryan every year except this one. "He's helped me through a lot of different times in my hockey.

He gives me advice all the time and helps me out, cheers me up, that kinda stuff. He knows a lot, but can't skate very well or shoot."

Darren's dad is also a coach. He has told Darren that if he didn't want to play hockey that would be o.k. "You can do whatever you want, there's the non-hitting league that has no practices, there's other sports and there's a bunch of other stuff you can do instead" (Darren quoting his Dad). Darren feels that although his dad does not pressure him, he puts greater pressure on himself when his dad is coaching in order to "show him that you are supposed to be here…"

When I asked Allan about any pressure from parents to play at a high level he said there was none. His parents support him in what he does and try to get him to reach his own goals. For Allan, that goal is to make the NHL and his dad will help him anyway he can, including paying for private training, extra tournaments, camps and teams.

Ed is another story altogether. He feels a lot of pressure to keep playing from parents and siblings. When I asked him how it felt with this constant observation and pressure, he responded: "I don't want them to watch me play, then I'll have fun and it'll be better." I then asked Ed to look into the future a little to a time where he may be a parent and decide if his son or daughter would play hockey. Ed immediately replied, "If he wanted to." I responded by saying, "Would you ask him?" Again Ed replied very quickly and stated quite emphatically, "Yes, because if he doesn't want to then what's the point? He's not going to have fun."

Teach Us! Have Fun with Us!

"(A successful coach) listens to his team like maybe they have something to say" (Nick)

Coaches play an integral role in any organized sport. They act as teachers, mentors, friends, fundraisers and sometimes surrogate parents. For the most part, the participants' coaches were well liked and respected. A few players mentioned a former coach with whom they struggled or didn't like. Some of the coaching comments tie in with the practice section, especially in terms of what drills or activities the players are made to do. Overwhelmingly, the players wanted to learn from their coaches and be listened to. They also wanted their coaches to have fun as well.

Doug: What advice would you give to minor hockey coaches?

Ed: Not just to yell at the players the whole time, but to have fun too. (He could) not make players skate the whole time, and sorta like, joining in in some little games.

Nick; (A successful coach) listens to his team like maybe they have something to say.

Darren: They're really nice to the players, they compliment, they, but they don't forget to criticize for bad behaviour or bad thing(s), but they won't say it in a way that hurts your feelings. They'll say it in a way that you can, that can help you correct it. They could explain to you why you did it wrong and how you can correct it. Just approaching it differently.

Jack: If you see one of your players make a mistake, just tell them what they did wrong and how they can fix it. And just stay positive.

Colin: Don't yell so much. (At who?) The kids. And I don't think they should bench (sit out) as much if you do something wrong.

Brad: Play the guys that are playing good, like if there's other guys that aren't playing as good, like don't give as much ice time.

Allan: Let them do drills like a normal coach, not so much skating, but more shooting.

Coaches are the ones that talk to the players more than anyone else. They have an incredible opportunity to support the players as they correct skill or strategic mistakes. The players have definite ideas of what coaches could be saying to them in those situations.

Darren: One game we played absolutely horrible, I think they beat us 11-2. After the game he made us wear our jerseys inside out and backwards. And we'd have to sit in the dressing room like that for 10 minutes. (How come?) Because we played, like inside out and backwards people, that's what he said. (So did it work?) It did. It told us to play our game. I personally was a little upset that game, because I had played pretty good, but, what can you do.

Brad: (on being pulled out of net and replaced after letting in three goals in a row) He (coach) said that like I'd do better next game, like that it just wasn't my night. Sometimes, like one time I got pulled and my coach said, sometimes you're the hero

but this time you weren't, it doesn't really matter. You'll do good next time.

Allan: Probably (coaches) precise stuff (skill or strategy related) and parents general things.

Ryan: Specific things, it makes you feel better in one area, not just a little better in some of them."

A few of the participants talked about coaches yelling. None of them had coaches that yell at them currently, however, most had had some sort of experience with a "yeller". The consensus was that yelling doesn't work. It didn't matter whether it was yelling at the players, the refs or the other team – yelling has absolutely no effect other than embarrassment. Ed summed it up best, "The team feels like, the coach is sorta stupid because there is no point of yelling because it just makes you do worse. It makes you like, not feel good."

Chapter Six: General Discussion

Theme One: Time

Minor hockey is a huge time commitment that can't be taken lightly by parents or players. The eight players involved in this study are primarily missing socialization with peers outside of hockey. If this situation is balanced with socialization within their team: on the ice, in the locker room and on road trips, then the sacrifices seem to balance out. Wankel and Kreisel's (1985) study of 10 factors relating to sport enjoyment found that social factors such as "being on a team" and "being with friends" were more important than extrinsic factors such as "getting rewards," "winning the game," and pleasing others. This point is an important one especially for coaches to consider in structuring their seasons. Time for socialization will not only bring the team closer together, but may keep athletes involved for longer.

Most of the participants were actively involved in other sports as well as hockey. At times, these sports can come into conflict with each other and lead to territorial behaviour from coaches and parents. Petlichkoff (1992) raised this issue and cautioned against overspecialization at too early an age. One side effect can be over-use injuries and declining participation in some programs. Petlichkoff also shared a personal insight regarding coaches using scare tactics to keep athletes involved in their program at the expense of others. As a junior high basketball and volleyball coach I, too, have run into situations where a hockey coach would not allow a 13 year old to play both sports. Even a dedicated hockey player like Allan, who trains more than any of the other participants, still plays lacrosse and finds time to play with his friends. There must be an ability to temper commitment to one sport

with the benefits of being a multi-sport athlete. Côté, Baker and Abernethy's (2003) chapter entitled: *From play to practice: a developmental framework for the acquisition of expertise in team sports* provides an excellent overview of this dilemma.

Theme Two: Competition

The fact that winning is more fun than losing is fairly obvious. What may not be so apparent, however, is that the team outcome is less a predictor of fun than the individual perception of self-performance (Wankel & Sefton, 1989). The participants in this study generally agreed with this statement and recognized that they could feel good and have fun even in a losing effort. In fact, some athletes would rather lose a close game where their skills were challenged than win a game that was "too easy."

It is important to remember that competition does not necessarily mean winning or losing. Often, competition is seen as a bad thing and eliminated (O'Reilly, Tompkins & Gallant, 2001). Competition can be a healthy motivator when used appropriately such as in the search for personal improvement, team cooperation and planning tactics. Part of the reason these players enjoy hockey is the competition – they like to pit their skills and athleticism against other players. The problem can be when those other players are either too good, or too bad. Following the Flow Model (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), athletes in minor hockey need to pit their considerable skills against appropriate challenges. Too great a challenge results in anxiety and ultimately with more players choosing to leave organized hockey. Too little challenge leads to boredom and possibly the same consequence. Extrinsic competition, pressure from parents and coaches to win, is much less of a valuable motivator as intrinsic

competition, the desire to outstrip ones previous achievements. Leagues, coaches and parents need to keep this factor in mind when organizing, directing and choosing the competitive situations in to place athletes. Appropriate and game like competition, when applied to practice situations, can play a large role towards motivating players and improving their skills.

Minor hockey has a tiering process at the beginning of the season to place each player on appropriately levelled teams. The very laudable intent is to provide a consistent level of competition across the league. A number of the players, however, commented on the apparent political nature of the system. A common impression was that the coach's kids were either placed too high, or kept lower so their dad would coach. Sometimes players who clearly belonged in a higher tier would intentionally play poorly (submarining) at the try-outs in order to dominate during the season. I have placed this issue here because, although it deals with the structuring of the league, it has a direct effect on the appropriate level of competition. Although tiering was not a major theme, I felt the issues needed to be brought to the table strictly because of the effect tiering can have on a player's enjoyment of the game through appropriate levels of challenge. Tiering can also have a negative effect on an athlete's socialization as the makeup of teams change from year to year removing or replacing friends on a regular basis.

Theme Three: Structure

Most of the participants are bored at practices and are not getting the quality teaching and learning that they desire. Skating is seen as an important skill, but one that is over-emphasized by coaches and often practiced outside of a game type

context. The participants echo the findings of Strean and Holt (2000) in that games are perceived to be more fun than practices and any type of scrimmage is the best part of practice. The Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982) allows for athletes to learn skills within game-like settings, not in isolation from their practical applications. When youth go out and practice on their own they find ways to integrate competition and game-like situations to make the practice real and fun. Among the most important factors for enjoyment are testing one's skills against another and just doing the skills related to the particular sport (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). If athletes are always testing their skills in isolated environments they may be at a loss to incorporate those skills in the context of an actual game (Strean & Holt, 2000). An athlete who is able to skate around pylons exceptionally in practice may find it much more difficult to skate around the opposition in a game. On the other hand, the athlete who can demonstrate skills in a game situation can certainly extract those skills and demonstrate them in practice as well.

The topic of hitting, or full contact is a very intriguing one. As mentioned earlier, it took me a little by surprise the number of participants that mentioned hitting as being fun or enjoyable. Obviously, these same players may not care to be hit, although they recognize it as part of the game. Each participant shared a different experience with learning how to hit. From hours of practice time and special clinics and camps to almost no instructional time spent on hitting. This issue needs much more explanation and research. If coaches expect players to adapt instantly to the

demands of a full contact game, they are going to have to recognize individual differences and spend more time teaching players how to hit and be hit.

More research and study is needed surrounding the area of contact or hitting in minor hockey. Does hitting at the Pee Wee level cause a drop in participation levels? Is it only a matter of education and if so, how can we ensure all players receive proper instruction on the rules as well as giving and receiving a check?

Theme Four: Adults

Anytime a sport is organized, there is adult involvement. That involvement can be positive, negative or at times, just ambivalent. Minor hockey, despite the bad press at times, in this study has very supportive and committed adults involved in an overwhelmingly positive manner. From coaches to spectators to referees, for the most part, their interaction with the players and the sport in general is quite beneficial. Parents of the participants were overwhelmingly supportive of their boys and did not push them to play hockey at all costs. It is important for these boys to have their parents involved with their hockey lives but not controlling.

These athletes had a very clear understanding of their parents' role both at the rink and at home. At this age, they respect their coaches and do not need much advice form their parents. Support me, cheer me, drive me but by all means do not embarrass me by yelling at the ref or the other team! All players had experienced an obnoxious fan (read relative) at some point and although this behaviour was not prevalent, most would agree that there is no place for this in youth sport.

Coaches are responsible for the development of these players and ultimately, their continued interest and participation in the sport. None of the participants

particularly enjoyed practices, especially the skating drills. They much more enjoyed practices that emulated game situations. Don't just make me skate, let me shoot and pass too! Côté and Hay (2002) used the terms 'deliberate practice' and 'deliberate play' to refer to the types of experience athletes have at various levels in their training. Deliberate practice requires effort, is not necessarily enjoyable and involves some form of delayed gratification. Allan alluded to this form of practice when he talked about his dryland training and how he knew when his muscles burned that he would be a faster skater – eventually. Deliberate play is an enjoyable organized activity created to provide pleasurable participation. An athlete's chronological progression typically involves three stages (Côté and Hay, 2002). The sampling years (between 7 and 12) can be characterized by large amounts of deliberate play and small amounts of deliberate practice. The specializing years (13-16) involve a fairly equal amount of deliberate play and practice. Finally, in the investment years (17+) the amount of deliberate practice overwhelms the amount of deliberate play.

From the responses of the participants, it seems like they may be getting too much deliberate practice and not enough deliberate play. This point would hold true for their ages (12-14), in fact most of these players would still be in the sampling stage and therefore should have the bulk of their time committed to deliberate play. Perhaps this is the reason why the players in this study enjoyed shinny hockey so much – it restored the balance by providing much needed deliberate play.

Hansen and Gauthier (1988) surveyed 2899 coaches in the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association to ascertain their reasons for coaching. The top three reasons identified as most important for the coaches at all levels were enjoyment (87%), skill

development (83%) and character development (75%). Recommendations of the study included a need for hockey associations to focus their attention on "....skill and attitude development within a framework of understanding age characteristics, sound practice plans and improvements of objectives for each player" (p. 150). Petlichkoff (1992) added that for success to be achieved, coaches have to widen their goal of "winning" to much more comprehensive personal and team performance goals that do not rely on external factors such as opponent skill and a level playing field. If coaches focus on performance rather than outcomes, the definition of a successful season becomes more than a win-loss record. I would also add that by combining this sort of performance based goal setting with practices that include skills learned in context, players and coaches would find more and longer lasting success.

Chapter Seven: Insights And Recommendations

Much has been said about the negative aspects of minor hockey. Media have a tendency to sensationalize the negative and marginalize the positive. As this research project took shape, I had no idea what I would find out by talking to these eight Pee Wee hockey players. Given the media's general tendency to only report the negative, despite my own love of the game, I steeled myself to hear horrific stories of incompetent coaches, screeching hockey moms and dads trying to relive their failed NHL dreams through their sons. I have to admit that I was pleasantly surprised to find evidence of a healthy sport, filled with dedicated coaches, supportive parents and happy athletes. Is minor hockey perfect? I challenge you to find any youth sport that is. There are always improvements to be made as leagues try to keep pace with a rapidly changing society and increased demands on the time of our youth.

Minor hockey is an excellent way for children and youth to learn the sport, develop and improve their skills and pit themselves against others of the same general skill level. The insights and recommendations that follow are not intended as a pronounced judgement on minor hockey from yet another outsider. These thoughts are my attempt to translate the views of eight youth with a combined experience of over 50 years of minor hockey between them. I think it's time we listened to those who have the most to lose. And gain.

Parents

1. *Listen to your kids.* They know what they like and need from sport. Be prepared for answers that may not match your personal expectations. Especially at the Pee

Wee level, these are young men with the hearts of boys. They love the game – feed that love and provide opportunity for socialization and enjoyment.

2. *Hockey is not life*. Players want your support and presence, not judgement and absenteeism. Treat the game for what it is – a game and allow your child to have fun and find the intrinsic joy of sport.
3. *Don't embarrass your child!* As part of minor hockey rules, a team can be assessed a "bench minor" (2 minute penalty served by someone on the team) if a spectator is belligerent to a referee. Whenever a participant mentioned an incident is was with a great amount of embarrassment on behalf of whoever belonged to that parent. Darren described a specific incident in detail.

> Once, ya, one of the fans was yelling and swearing at the ref and he (ref) gave our team a 4 minute double minor. Bench minor. I think it was a grandparent, but it was just a really bad penalty call, or something, and they were just mouthing him off, and then I had an argument and then the 4 minutes so fortunately I didn't have to serve it. Ya, I feel that that's not proper, because it's not our fault. It's like, we didn't tell him to mouth off the ref, but that was his choice.

4. *Keep in mind the celebrations and enjoy the games.* Try going out for pizza after that tough overtime loss where the team played their hearts out but still lost. Celebrate the performance more than the outcome. Allow the players their own types of celebration and remember that they may not want to re-hash those 2 key minutes in the third period. Remember who hockey is for! (it's for the players)

Coaches

1. *Have fun with your players.* You set the tone for your team – if you are allowed to have fun and enjoy the game then so are they. Use fun as motivation and as a link to that intrinsic joy that seeks mastery over a difficult skill. Put your skates on and play!
2. *Introduce game-like situation in practices and provide opportunities for healthy competition.* I know of one coach who uses rubber chickens to teach puck awareness. His players can't wait to play with the rubber chicken because it adds a totally different element to the game. Consider the TGfU approach and what it can do for your practices. Even the dullest skating drill can be made more fun by introducing appropriate competition and game-like situations.
3. *Listen to your players. Don't yell!* These are young men. They have good ideas, are intelligent and need to be consulted. Allow them space to learn and a safe environment in which to make mistakes and learn from them. Yelling should be reserved for being heard at the far end of the rink. Save your yelling for encouraging comments.
4. *Be a friend.* Be interested in your players for more than their hockey skills. Enter their lives, listen to their concerns and fulfill your role as a responsible adult. For some kids, you may be the only one in their life. Make the most of that status and remember who is watching you.

League Organizers

1. *Provide opportunity for more than just elite players to enjoy the sport and continue.* Many cities now offer recreational leagues or non-hitting leagues for

those players that want a different type of experience. Take a good look at your organization and ask yourself if those players truly have a place to play after Pee Wee.

2. *Consider standards for hitting instruction prior to the beginning of Pee Wee.* Coaches need be instructed as well regarding teaching techniques, biomechanics and safe ways to practice these difficult skills. Minimum standards for hitting instruction or a mandatory camp for coaches and players. Consider using older players (second year) to mentor and teach younger (first year) ones. Be very aware of the huge range of size and physical maturity at this age, especially in your practices but also in how you match your lines during games. Reflect on this comment from Ryan:

   Doug: Do you think players drop out because of hitting?

   Ryan: Yeah, I do.

   Doug: Do you think they would if they got the same kind of experience that you had at hitting camp?

   Ryan: Probably not.

3. *Tiering structure – beware of politics and submarining tactics.* A tiering selection can make or break a player's hockey season. Do not take it lightly! Minimize the politics and use tiering for what it was designed for – to make sure of appropriate levels of competition.

Future Directions

I believe it would be valuable to repeat this study on a grander scale with much greater depth and a little more breadth. Charles Gallmeier (1988) provides a

detailed look into the methodology surrounding such a study and provides an excellent example of sport ethnography with professional players. He was able to essentially join the "Summit City Rockets" (a minor league team pseudonym two steps below the National Hockey League) for the 1981-1982 hockey season as an observer. Through this process he gained invaluable insights into the inner workings of a professional hockey team. Nancy Theberge's (1995) study of a women's hockey team over a two year period is another example of the depth possible through qualitative research.

It would be extremely beneficial to all the stakeholders in minor hockey to see a case study done on a Pee Wee team for a full year. For a researcher to become part of a hockey team for a full season would shed more light on many of the themes brought out by this study. This type of project would also allow for ongoing interviews with players, coaches, referees and parents in addition to providing opportunities for observation of scrimmages, road trips, games, socials and practices. Ultimately, this qualitative initiative could be conducted at the same time as quantitative studies such as Dunn and Causgrove Dunn's (1999) which involved 173 male Pee Wee hockey players, or Wankel and Sefton's (1989) *A Season-Long Investigation of Fun in Youth Sports* which involved both male hockey players (67) and female ringette players (55) between the ages of 7 to 15 years. A combined study of this depth and breadth would provide an excellent platform from which to view future development of minor hockey.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics – Committee on Sports Medicine and Fitness (2000) Safety in youth ice hockey: the effects of body checking. *Pediatrics, 105,* 657-658.

Barber, K. (Ed.). (1998) *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary.* Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.

Bean, D. & Kinnear, G. (1989) An obsession with fun? *Runner, 27*(4), 19-20.

Blanchard, B.M. & Castaldi, C.R. (1991) Injuries in youth hockey. *Physician and Sports Medicine, 19,* 54-71.

Boostrom, R. (1994) Learning to pay attention. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 7,* 51-64.

Brust, J.D. et. al. (1992) Children's ice hockey injuries. *American Journal of Diseases of Children, 146,* 741-747.

Canadian Institute for Health Information (2004). Improving the health of Canadians. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Population Health Initiative.

Chalip, L. et al. (1984) Variations of experience in formal and informal sport. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 55,* 109 – 116.

Childress, H. (2000) *Landscapes of betrayal, landscapes of joy – Curtisville in the lives of its teenagers.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Colburn, K. (1985) Honour, Ritual and Violence in Ice Hockey. *Canadian Journal of Sociology, 10,* 153-170.

Côté, J., Baker J., Abernethy, B. (2003) In Starkes, J.L. and Ericsson, K.A. (ed.), Expert performance in sports: advances in research on sport expertise,

Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, p.85-87; 89-113; 414-416.

Cothran, D.J. (2001) Curricular change in physical education: success stories from the front line. *Sport, Education and Society*, *6*, 67 – 79.

Craig, C.L., et. al. (2001) Increasing physical activity: supporting children's participation. *Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute*. Retrieved July 29, 2004 from http:www.cflri.ca/pdf/e/2000pam.pdf.

Craig, C.L. & Cameron C. (2004) Increasing physical activity: assessing trends from 1998 to 2003. *Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.* Retrieved July 29, 2004 from http:www.cflri.ca/pdf/e/2002pam.pdf.

Csikszenmihalyi, M. (1975). *Beyond boredom and anxiety*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey – Bass Publishers.

Csikszenmihalyi, M. (1988) *Optimal experience: psychological studies of flow in consciousness*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

Csikszenmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience.* New York: Harper and Row.

Daley, A. J. (2002) School based physical activity in the United Kingdom: Can it create physically active adults? *Quest, 54*, 21 – 33.

Davies, B. (1982) *Life in the classroom and playground.* Melbourne: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

Denzin, N.K & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 1-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dunn, G.H. & Causgrove-Dunn, J. (1999) Goal orientations, perceptions of aggression and sportspersonship in elite male youth ice hockey players. *The Sport Psychologist, 13*, 183-200.

Ellis, J.L. (1998) The Teacher As Interpretive Inquirer. In J.L. Ellis (Ed), *Teaching From Understanding: Teacher as Interpretive Inquirer* (pp. 5-13). New York, NY: Garland.

Ellis, J.L. (1998) Interpretive Inquiry As a Formal Research Process. In J.L. Ellis (Ed), *Teaching From Understanding: Teacher as Interpretive Inquirer* (pp. 15-32). New York, NY: Garland.

Ellis, J.L. (1998) Narrative Inquiries with Children and Youth. In J.L. Ellis (Ed), *Teaching From Understanding: Teacher as Interpretive Inquirer* (pp. 33-55). New York, NY: Garland.

Faulkner, R. (1974) Making violence by doing work: selves, identities and situations, and the world of professional hockey. *Sociology of Work And Occupations, 1*, 288-312.

Gallmeier, Charles P. (1988) Methodological issues in qualitative sport research: participant observation among hockey players. *Sociological Spectrum, 8*, 213-235.

Global Television Report. (2002) Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Winter Games. Retrieved December 3, 2005, from http://www.olympic.org/common/asp/download_report.asp?file=en_report_458.pdf&id=458

Griffin, L.L et al. (1993) What does 'fun' mean in physical education? *JOPERD, 64*, 63-66.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Halas, J. (2002) Physical Education that Cultivates a Reclaiming Landscape. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 21*, 267-286.

Hastie, P.A. (1998) The participation and perception of girls within a unit of sport education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 17*, 157-171.

Hockey Canada Website. (n.d.). Retrieved December 12, 2003 from http://www.hockeycanada.ca/e/about/index.html

Ingham, A.G. & Dewar, A. (1999) Through the eyes of youth: "deep play" in PeeWee ice hockey.in Coakley, J. (ed) *Inside Sports*, London, Routledge: p. 17-27.

Kulinna, P. H. & Silverman, S. (2000) Teachers' attitudes toward teaching physical activity and fitness. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 71*, 80 - 84.

Lesyk, J.J. & Kornspan, A.S. (2000) Coaches expectations and beliefs regarding benefits of youth sport participation. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 90*, 399-402.

Mandigo, James L. & Couture, Roger T. (1996) An overview of components of fun in physical education, organized sport and physical activity programs. *Avante, 2*, 56-72.

Mayers, M. (2001) *Street Kids & Streetscapes: Panhandling, Politics and Prophesies.* New York: Peter Lang.

McKenzie, T. L. et al. (2000) Student activity levels, lesson context, and teacher behaviour during middle school physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 71*, 249 – 259.

McKenzie, T.L. et al. (1999) Classroom teachers' leisure physical activity and their conduct of physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 19*, 126-132.

McKenzie, T. L. (2001) Promoting physical activity in youth: focus on middle school environments. *Quest, 53*, 326 – 334.

McPherson, B. (1976) Involuntary turnover and organizational effectiveness in the National Hockey League. In R.S. Gruneau & J.G. Albinson (Eds) *Canadian Sport: Sociological Perspectives* (p. 26-40). Don Mills, Ontario: Addison- Wesley.

Merriam, S.B. (1998) What is Qualitative Research? In S.B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education (pp.3-25).* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

O'Reilly, E. et al. (2001) "They ought to enjoy physical activity, you know?": Struggling with fun in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society, 6*, 211 – 221.

Packer, M.J and Addison, R.B. (1989) Entering the Circle: Hermeneutic Investigation in Psychology. Albany, NY: Sany.

Peshkin, Alan. (1993) The goodness of qualitative research. *Educational Researcher, 22*, 24-30.

Podilchak, W. (1991) Distinctions of fun, enjoyment and leisure. *Leisure Studies, 10*, 133-148.

Portman, J.A. (1995) Who is having fun in physical education classes? Experiences of sixth grade students in elementary and middle schools. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 14*, 445-453.

Sanders, S.W. (1996) Children's physical education experiences. Their Interpretations can help teachers. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation And Dance*, 67, 51-56.

Scanlon, T.K. (1982) Motivation and stress in competitive youth sports. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 53*, 27-28; 36.

Schick, D.M. & Meeuwise, W.H. (2003) Injury rates and profiles in female ice hockey players. *American Journal of Sports Medicine, 31,* 47-52.

Seidman, I.E. (1991) Technique Isn't Everything, But It Is a Lot. In I.E. Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (pp. 56-71). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Statistics Canada. (2000-2001) Health Statistics gathered by the Federal Government. Retrieved February 7, 2004, from http://www.statscan.ca

Strean, William B. & Holt, Nicholas L. (2000) Coaches', athletes', and parents' perceptions of fun in youth sports: assumptions about learning and implications for practice. *Avante, 6*, 83-98.

Stephens, D.E. & Kavanagh, B. (2003) Aggression in Canadian youth ice hockey: the role of moral atmosphere. *International Sports Journal, 7*, 109-121.

Theberge, N. (1995) Gender, sport, and the construction of community: A case study from women's ice hockey. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *12*, 389-402.

Treasure, D.C. & Roberts G.C. (2001) Students' perceptions of the motivational climate, achievement beliefs, and satisfaction in physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *72*, 165 – 175.

Vaz, E.W. (1982) *The Professionalization of Young Hockey Players.* Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.

Wankel, L.M. & Sefton, J.M. (1989). A season-long investigation of fun in youth sports. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *11*, 355-366.

Wankel, L.M. & Sefton, J.M. (1989b). Factors distinguishing high and low – fun experiences in ice hockey. *World Leisure and Recreation*, Fall edition.

Weber, S.J. (1986) The nature of interviewing. *Phenomenology + Pedagogy*, *4*, 65 – 72.

Whitehead, M. (1988) The danger of fun. *The British Journal of Physical Education, 19*, 155.

Appendices

A. Parent Information Letter

B. Parent Consent Form

C. Participant Information Letter

D. Participant Consent Form

E. General Interview Questions

F. Specific Hockey Related Questions

G. Pre-Interview Activity Selection List

H. Minor Hockey Association Divisions

Appendix A

The Minor Hockey Experience
Parent/Guardian Information Letter

Dear Parents or Guardians:

This letter is to inform you about a study I am conducting at the University of Alberta. My name is Douglas Gleddie and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation. The study will be supervised by my academic advisor, Dr. William B. Strean. The information gathered in this study will be used to write a graduate thesis paper, and may be published in a professional journal or presented at a related conference in the future.

Background and Purpose

Although fun is recognized as a valuable motivator for children, we know less about how children themselves experience fun. The interactions between levels of fun and levels of success in ice hockey, one of the most popular sports in Canada, make this a key area for research. The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of minor hockey from the perspectives of the players themselves. How do they define fun? In what ways do they experience it through hockey? What takes away from this experience? What contributes to a positive experience?

What Will the Study Involve?
If you and your child are willing to participate, you will both be asked to meet briefly with me so that I can provide further information about the study and answer any questions you or your child may have. If you decide to proceed, your child will also be asked to choose from a selection of pre-interview activities at this time. The activity is to be done prior to the first interview and will consist of a choice of a drawing, timeline or journal. The activity will take from 30 minutes to an hour to complete. We will then set up three interviews to be held at a place most convenient and comfortable for you and your child. Each meeting is expected to take about forty-five minutes, for a total time commitment of roughly two-and-a-half hours. The meetings will be audio taped so that I can transcribe and study them at a later date.

The first meeting is intended to help me get to know your child in general, and to give them the chance to tell me about the pre-interview activity he has completed. In the second meeting, I will continue to discuss your child's experiences with minor hockey, focusing on revisiting important topics from the first interview. The last meeting will be conducted as a group session with one or two other players from your son's hockey team. We will be discussing many of the same topics and concentrating on the experience of minor hockey. If necessary, I will contact your child a fourth time, over the phone or personally to check to make sure I have correctly heard and understood what your child has told me in the previous meetings. I may also ask your child to clarify anything I haven't quite understood.

Benefits

Although there will be no direct benefit to your child, they will have the opportunity to explore their relationship with the game of hockey. The first-hand information your child provides will help researchers, coaches, spectators and parents to understand what the experience of minor hockey is like for children.

Risks

There are no health risks involved. If your child feels anxious or uncomfortable about answering specific questions, he or she can simply say, "pass" and I will move to the next question. If I see that your child is uncomfortable with a certain topic or question, I will immediately ask a different question or change the topic of discussion.

Freedom to Withdraw

You may choose to have your child withdraw from the study at any time without consequence by contacting one of the investigators. Upon withdrawal, you or your child may request that their information be removed from the study. In this case, all participant files will be removed from the study and destroyed.

Confidentiality

All information will be kept private. The drawings, activities, tapes, transcripts and notes made from the meetings with your child will kept in a locked filing cabinet to which only I will have access. Only my advisor, Dr. William B. Strean, and I will review the information. You and your child will not be identified in my thesis, or any other presentation or publication of this study. The tapes and notes will be kept for a period of five years post-publication, after which they will be destroyed.

Additional Contact

If you have any concerns about this study, you may contact Dr. Brian Maraj, Chair of the Faculty Ethics Committee, at 492-5910. Dr. Maraj has no direct involvement with this project.

Thank you for your consideration of this research project. Please feel free to contact me, or my advisor if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Douglas Gleddie
Graduate Student
Phone: (780) 469-0426

William B. Strean, PhD
Associate Professor
Phone: (780) 492-3890

Appendix B

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Title of the Study: The Minor Hockey Experience

Investigator: Douglas Gleddie
Graduate Student (Master of Arts, Physical Education)
Phone: 469-0426

Supervisor: Dr. William B. Strean, PhD
Associate Professor
Phone: 492-3890

Do you understand that your child has been asked to be in a research study?
Yes No

Have you and your child read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet?
Yes No

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved with your child in taking part in
Yes No
this research study?

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?
Yes No

Do you understand that you or your child may refuse to participate, or withdraw from
Yes No
the study at any time, without consequence?

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who
Yes No
will have access to your information?

This study was explained to me by: _____

I agree to let my child take part in this study:

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Parent	Date	Printed Name
_____	_____	
Wtiness (if available)	Printed Name	

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate:

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

*A copy of this consent form must be given to the participant's parent.

Appendix C

The Minor Hockey Experience
Youth Information Letter

Dear Youth Hockey Player:

My name is Douglas Gleddie, and I am a student at the University of Alberta. I want to invite you to participate in a study that I am doing to learn more about how youth experience minor hockey. I want to know how hockey is a part of your life: what you like and dislike, practices, games, traveling – the whole experience.

What will you be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, I will first ask you to choose from a selection of pre-interview activities. You will do this activity at home and bring it back with you the next week. I will then ask you to meet with me for the first 45 minute interview at a location we have selected with your parents. This may be at the arena, your home or a local school. We will meet three times for approximately forty-five minutes each time. The first time we meet, you will get a chance to tell me about the kinds of things you do everyday, and talk about some things you like to do. I will also ask you to tell me about the activity you have done. The second time we meet, I will ask you some more specific questions about what hockey is like for you. The third meeting will be with another member of your hockey team for a group interview about playing hockey. Finally, I may phone or meet with you one last time just so I can make sure that I understand everything you told me during the first three meetings. I will use a tape recorder to tape our talks, so that I can remember everything we say and write it down later.

Why I might want to do this?

Although there will be no direct benefit to you, this is an opportunity to share your understanding of the minor hockey experience. The information from this study will help researchers, coaches, spectators and parents, to understand what playing minor hockey is actually like for you.

Will being in the study hurt?

There are no health risks. At any time during our meetings, if you don't want to talk about something I ask about, you don't have to answer. Just say "pass" and we will talk about something else.

How many people will know about it?

The tapes and notes from our meetings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. I will be writing out what we say on the tapes, but I will not use your name. I will not identify you or give out any personal information about you in any presentations or writings about the study. I will erase the tapes and destroy the notes (using a paper shredder) five years after I publish it.

Can I change my mind about being in the study?

If you don't want to be in the study anymore, you can just tell me. I won't be upset or try to change your mind. If you want, all the information gathered up to that point can be removed from the study.

Who can I talk to about being in the study?

You can call me, or my supervisor at the University, Dr. William B. Strean, if you have questions about the study. If you are worried about something in the study, you can call Dr. Brian Maraj at the University of Alberta at 492-5910 to talk about it. Dr. Maraj isn't involved in the study at all and you can talk to him about anything that's worrying you about the study.

Thank you for reading this letter and I hope you will want to help me with my study.

Sincerely,

Douglas Gleddie
Graduate Student
Phone: (780) 469-0426

William B. Strean, PhD
Associate Professor
Phone: (780) 492-3890

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form

Title of the Study: The Minor Hockey Experience

Investigator: Douglas Gleddie
Graduate Student (Master of Arts, Physical Education)
Phone: 469-0426

Supervisor: Dr. William B. Strean, PhD
Associate Professor
Phone: 492-3890

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study? Yes No

Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet? Yes No

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved with your taking part in this research study? Yes No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes No

Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time? Yes No

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to your information? Yes No

This study was explained to me by: _____

I agree to take part in this study:

_____ _____ _____

Signature of Participant Date Printed Name

I believe that the persons signing this form understand what is involved in the study and voluntarily agree to participate:

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

*A copy of this consent form must be given to the participant's parent.

Appendix E

Initial Interview Questions

Modified from Ellis (1998)

1. I would like to get an idea of what you do on an average day. Do you think you could tell me about one day, any day, in your week from start to finish?
2. What do you like to do in your free time?
3. Is there anything that you don't do, but wish that you could? [If yes: What stops you from doing it?]
4. Tell me one thing that you really like about yourself…
5. Who are your favorite people? [What makes them your favorite?]
6. Is there anyone you really look up to or think is a kind of hero that you would really like to be like? [If yes: Who are they and what do they say or do that makes you want to be like them?]
7. If you could be and do *anything* you wanted, what would you like to do when you get older? How do you think you could make that happen, if you wanted to?
8. Lots of kids dream about being professional athletes. Have you ever wished for that? Tell me about that…
9. Some kids really like sports a lot. Would you say that you do? Tell me why/ why not?
10. What sports or activities do you really like to do? Would you say you're good at them? Tell me a little bit about why you like them…

11. Are there any sports you think you aren't so great at? [If yes: Why do you think that is? Do you wish you could be better at them? Do you think there is any way you could try to get better at them? How?]

Appendix F

Hockey Specific Interview Questions

1. Describe a specific part of your pre-interview activity. (drawing, event on a time-line, entry in a journal etc.)
2. Describe how a great hockey game / practice makes you feel.
3. Describe how a bad game / practice makes you feel.
4. Tell me about your favourite physical activity.
5. Does that activity make you feel successful?
    a. How?
6. Describe a fun afternoon on the rink.
7. What advice would you give other kids your age about playing minor hockey?
    a. parents of minor hockey players?
    b. coaches?
    c. players?
    d. spectators?
8. Tell me about your best day of hockey.
9. What sort of activities do you find fun? Describe one.
    a. How does the fun in that activity relate to the fun you have in hockey?
    b. Why the difference? (if any)

Appendix G

Pre-Interview Activities

Please choose the activity that you would like to do best. Use the paper provided for you, and follow the instructions carefully. This activity will be referred to in our interviews and will be included in the study.

1. Draw a picture of the best day you ever had.

2. Make a timeline of a significant activity throughout your life. Mark on it the dates and titles of important and critical incidents and events. Add drawings if you wish.

3. Draw a picture of your favourite activity.

4. Draw two pictures that show what things were like for you before and after a significant hockey related event.

5. Make a drawing that represents how you experience hockey.

6. Make a diagram of a place that is important to you and use notes or key words to indicate what happens where in that place.

7. Keep a written journal including your hockey experiences for one week.

Appendix H

Minor Hockey Association Divisions

Initiation	First time hockey players or players under 10 on December 31 of the current season.
Pre-novice	under 7 years old as of December 31 of the current season
Novice	under 9 years old as of December 31 of the current season
Atom	under 11 years old as of December 31 of the current season
Pee Wee	under 13 years old as of December 31 of the current season
Bantam	under 15 years old as of December 31 of the current season
Midget	under 18 years old as of December 31 of the current season
Junior	under 21 years old as of December 31 of the current season

Edmonton Minor Hockey Association, 2003
Dowloaded from:
http://emha.ca/?p=content&pid=8#Edmonton_Minor_Hockey_Association_Divisi